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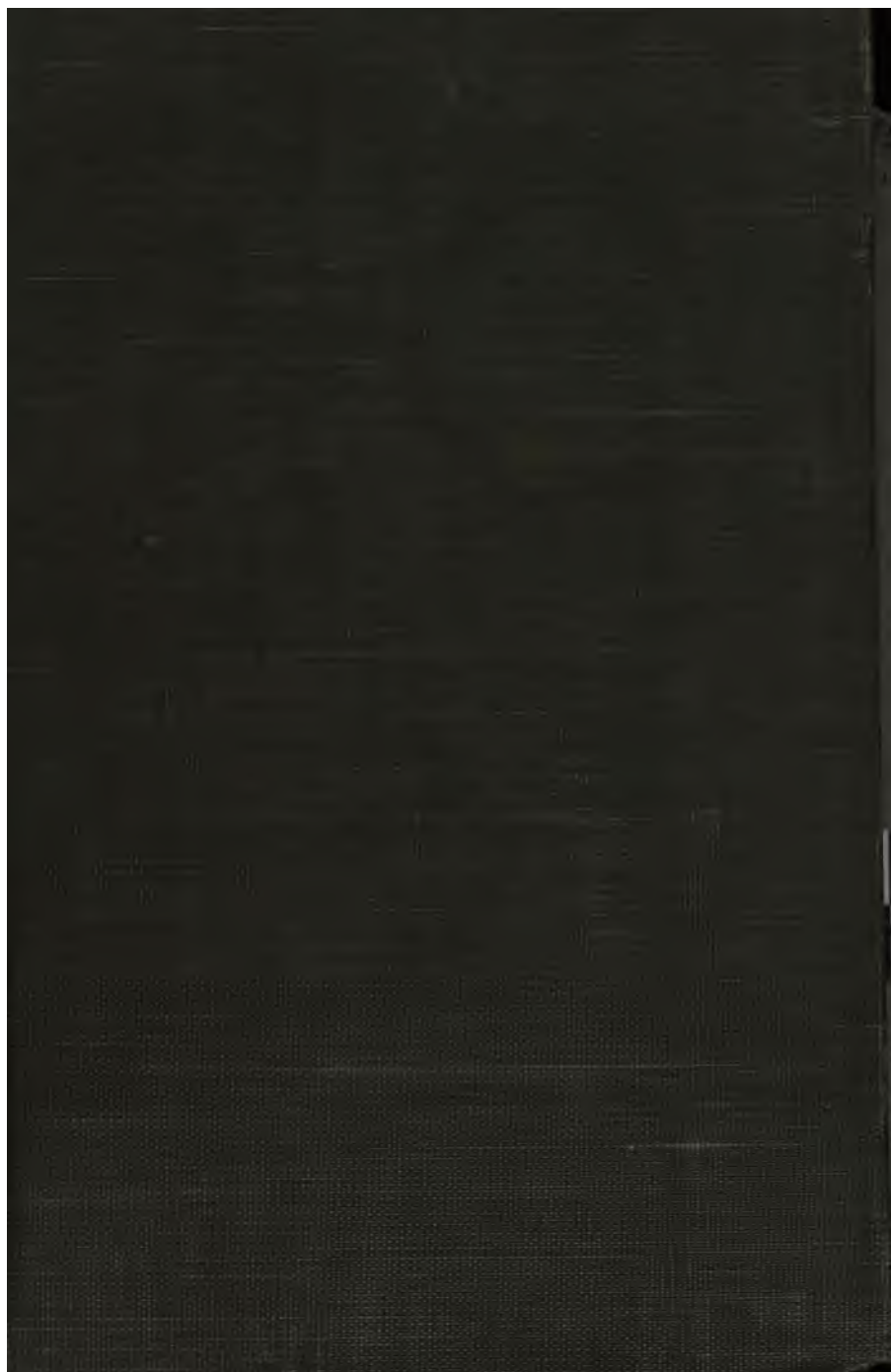
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THE BACCHANALS

*AND OTHER PLAYS*

BY

EURIPIDES

THE BACCHANALS TRANSLATED BY

HENRY HART MILMAN

THE OTHER PLAYS TRANSLATED BY

MICHAEL WODHULL

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HENRY MORLEY*

LL.D., PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AT  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE beautiful translation of "The Bacchanals" which opens this volume was made by the late Henry Hart Milman, who was Dean of St. Paul's when he died in 1868. It had its origin in English verse translations made to illustrate a course of Latin Lectures on the History of Greek Poetry, delivered when Milman had made his own reputation as a dramatic poet with "Fazio" in 1815, "The Fall of Jerusalem" in 1820, and "The Martyr of Antioch" in 1821. In that year 1821, Milman—who was then Vicar of St. Mary's, Reading—was elected to the Oxford Professorship of Poetry. He had been known in Oxford as a poet from his student years. In 1812 he had carried off the Newdigate Prize for an English Poem on the Apollo Belvedere, and he had three times obtained the Chancellor's Prize. As Poetry Professor he translated specimens of the Greek Dramatists upon whose art he lectured. These translations he published in 1865, with a development of two of the plays—"The Agamemnon" of Æschylus and "The Bacchanals" of Euripides—into complete versions. The volume in which these plays were published,\* with the translated Passages of Greek Poetry which had been set in the lectures given many years before, is a beautiful book, illustrated with woodcuts drawn from antique gems—the sort of book that ranks with the best ornaments of a well-furnished home. I thank most heartily the poet's son, Mr. Arthur Milman, and Mr. John Murray the publisher, for leave to borrow from the volume this translation of "The Bacchanals," for the purpose of giving to English readers a fuller sense of the genius of Euripides than they might get from the faithful last century translators upon whom we have chiefly to depend.

The other plays in this volume are given in the translations of Michael Wodhull, who published in 1809 his version of "The Nineteen Tragedies and Fragments of Euripides." Wodhull had published

\* "The Agamemnon of Æschylus and the Bacchanals of Euripides with Passages from the Lyric and Later Poets of Greece." Translated by Henry Hart Milman, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's. John Murray. 1865.

false wife and Thyestes to be served up to Thyestes at a feast. At this horror portents appeared in the skies. Atreus drowned Ærope, drove Thyestes out of Argos, and not only ruled in Argos but added Mycene when Eurystheus had been slain by the sons of Hercules. But Ægisthus, a son of Thyestes by his own daughter Pelopia, murdered his uncle Atreus and made his father again king in Argos. Atreus had by his wife Ærope, before she gave herself to Thyestes, two sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus. They were sent for protection against their uncle Thyestes to the court of Polyidas, king of Sicyon, who sent them on to Ceneus, king of Cætolia.

Agamemnon, while thus in difficulties, killed a Tantalus junior, grandson to the founder of the family. He killed this Tantalus that he might take possession of his wife Clytemnestra, daughter to Tyndarus, king of Sparta. Euripides in the "Iphigenia in Aulis" makes Clytemnestra reproach Agamemnon with having also killed the infant child of her first marriage by tearing it out of her arms and dashing it upon the floor. Castor and Pollux, sons of Leda by Jupiter Swan, made war then upon Agamemnon and reduced him to submission. Tyndarus king of Sparta then gave Clytemnestra to Agamemnon for a wife, and also helped him and his brother Menelaus to subdue Thyestes, who took refuge at an altar of Juno, and gave himself up to his nephews on promise that they would spare his life. They deposed him and confined him for the rest of his days in the island of Cithæra.

Clytemnestra's sister, the other daughter of Tyndarus, king of Sparta, was Helen, who had the chief princes of Greece for suitors. Tyndarus made them swear to support whatever man she might herself choose for husband, and her choice fell upon Menelaus. But soon after the marriage Paris, one of the sons of Priam, king of Troy, came with a splendid following to Sparta, and while her husband was away on business at Crete, Paris persuaded Helen to elope with him. Menelaus sent to demand her back from Troy. The Trojans kept her, and war followed with the siege of Troy, during which, according to Euripides in his play of "Helen," the real Helen had been conveyed by Mercury through the air and placed in the care of Proteus, king of Egypt, where she remained of stainless character, while Paris at Troy had only a cloud-image of her. Menelaus on his return from the ten years' war, driven upon the coast of Egypt, found his own Helen all that he could wish.

H. M.

January 1888.

# EURIPIDES.

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## THE BACCHANALS.

### PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

DIONYSUS.  
CHORUS OF BACCHANALS.  
TIRESIAS.  
CADMUS.  
PENTHEUS.

ATTENDANT.  
MESSENGER.  
SECOND MESSENGER.  
AGAVE.

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### DIONYSUS.

UNTO this land of Thebes I come, Jove's son,  
Dionysus ; he whom Semele of yore,  
'Mid the dread midwifery of lightning fire,  
Bore, Cadmus' daughter. In a mortal form,  
The God put off, by Dirce's stream I stand,  
And cool Ismenos' waters ; and survey  
My mother's grave, the thunder-slain, the ruins  
Still smouldering of that old ancestral palace,  
The flame still living of the lightning fire,  
Herè's immortal vengeance 'gainst my mother.

And well hath reverent Cadmus set his ban  
On that heaven-stricken, unapproached place.  
His daughter's tomb, which I have mantled o'er  
With the pale verdure of the trailing vine.

And I have left the golden Lydian shores,  
The Phrygian and the Persian sun-seared plains,  
And Bactria's walls ; the Medes' wild wintery land

Have passed, and Araby the Blest ; and all  
Of Asia, that along the salt-sea coast  
Lifts up her high-towered cities, where the Greeks,  
With the Barbarians mingled, dwell in peace.

And everywhere my sacred choirs, mine Orgies  
Have founded, by mankind confessed a God.  
Now first in an Hellenic town I stand.

Of all the Hellenic land here first in Thebes,  
I have raised my revel shout, my fawn-skin donned,  
Ta'en in my hand my thyrsus, ivy-crowned.

But here, where least beseemed, my mother's sisters  
Vowed Dionysus was no son of Jove :  
That Semele, by mortal paramour won,  
Belied great Jove as author of her sin ;  
'Twas but old Cadmus' craft : hence Jove in wrath  
Struck dead the bold usurper of his bed.

So from their homes I've goaded them in frenzy ;  
Their wits all crazed, they wander o'er the mountains,  
And I have forced them wear my wild attire.  
There's not a woman of old Cadmus' race,  
But I have maddened from her quiet house ;  
Unseemly mingled with the sons of Thebes, <sup>17. 13</sup>  
On the roofless rocks, 'neath the pale pines, they sit.

Needs must this proud recusant city learn,  
In our dread Mysteries initiate,  
Her guilt, and humbly seek to make atonement  
To me, for Semele, mine outraged mother—  
To me, the God confessed, of Jove begot.

Old Cadmus now his might and kingly rule  
To Pentheus hath given up, his sister's son,  
My godhead's foe ; who from the rich libation  
Repels me, nor makes mention of my name  
In holy prayer. Wherefore to him, to Thebes,  
And all her sons, soon will I terribly show  
That I am born a God : and so depart  
(Here all things well disposed) to other lands,  
Making dread revelation of myself.

But if this Theban city, in her ire,  
*With arms shall seek to drive from off the mountains*

My Bacchanal rout, at my wild Mænads' head  
 I'll meet, and mingle in the awful war.  
 Hence have I ta'en the likeness of a man,  
 Myself transmuted into human form.

But ye, who Tmolus, Lydia's strength, have left  
 My Thyasus of women, whom I have led  
 From lands barbarian, mine associates here,  
 And fellow-pilgrims ; lift ye up your drums,  
 Familiar in your native Phrygian cities,  
 Made by your mother Rhea's craft and mine ;  
 And beat them all round Pentheus' royal palace,  
 Beat, till the city of Cadmus throngs to see.  
 I to the Bacchanals in the dim glens  
 Of wild Cithæron go to lead the dance.

CHOR. From the Asian shore,

And by the sacred steep of Tmolus hoar,  
 Light I danced with wing-like feet,  
 Toilless toil and labour sweet !  
 Away ! away ! whoe'er he be ;  
 Leave our path, our temple free !  
 Seal up each silent lip in holy awe.  
 But I, obedient to thy law,

O Dionysus ! chant the choral hymn to thee.

Blest above all of human line,  
 Who, deep in mystic rites divine,  
 Leads his hallowed life with us,  
 Initiate in our Thyasus ;  
 And, purified with holiest waters,  
 Goes dancing o'er the hills with Bacchus' daughters.  
 And thy dark orgies hallows he,  
 O mighty Mother, Cybele !  
 He his thyrsus shaking round,  
 All his locks with ivy crowned,  
 O Dionysus ! boasts of thy dread train to be.

Bacchanals ! away, away !  
 Lead your God in fleet array ;  
 Bacchus lead, the ever young,  
 A God himself from Gods that sprung,



From the Phrygian mountains down  
 Through every wide-squared Grecian town.  
 Him the Theban queen of yore  
 'Mid Jove's fast-flashing lightnings bore :  
 In her awful travail wild  
 Sprung from her womb the untimely child,  
 While smitten with the thunderblast  
 The sad mother breathed her last.

Instant him Saturnian Jove  
 Received with all a mother's love ;  
 In his secret thigh immured,  
 There with golden clasps secured,  
 Safe from Herè's jealous sight ;  
 Then, as the Fates fulfilled, to light  
 He gave the hornéd god, and wound  
 The living snakes his brows around ;  
 Whence still the wandéd Mænads bear  
 Their serpent prey wreathed in their floating hair.

Put on thy ivy crown,  
 O Thebes, thou sacred town !  
 O hallowed house of dark-haired Semele !  
 Bloom, blossom everywhere,  
 With flowers and fruitage fair,  
 And let your frenzied steps supported be  
 With thyrsi from the oak  
 Or the green ash-tree broke :  
 Your spotted fawn-skins line with locks  
 Torn from the snowy fleecéd flocks :  
 Shaking his wanton wand let each advance,  
 And all the land shall madden with the dance.

Bromius, that his revel rout  
 To the mountains leads about ;  
 To the mountains leads along,  
 Where awaits the female throng ;  
 From the distaff, from the loom,  
 Raging with the God they come.  
 O ye mountains, wild and high,  
 Where the old Kouretæ lie :

Glens of Crete, where Jove was nurst,  
 In your sunless caverns first  
 The crested Korybantes found  
 The leathern drums mysterious round,  
 That, mingling in harmonious strife  
 With the sweet-breathed Phrygian fife,  
 In Mother Rhea's hands they place,  
 Meet the Bacchic song to grace.  
 And the frantic Satyrs round  
 That ancient Goddess leap and bound :  
 And soon the Trieteric dances light  
 Begin, immortal Bacchus' chief delight.

On the mountains wild 'tis sweet  
 When faint with rapid dance our feet ;  
 Our limbs on earth all careless thrown  
 With the sacred fawn-skins strewn,  
 To quaff the goat's delicious blood,  
 A strange, a rich, a savage food.  
 Then off again the revel goes  
 O'er Phrygian, Lydian mountain brows ;  
 Evoë ! Evoë ! leads the road,  
 Bacchus self the maddening God !  
 And flows with milk the plain, and flows with wine,  
 Flows with the wild bees' nectar-dews divine ;  
 And soars, like smoke, the Syrian incense pale—  
 The while the frantic Bacchanal  
 The beaconing pine-torch on her wand  
 Whirls around with rapid hand,  
 And drives the wandering dance about,  
 Beating time with joyous shout,  
 And casts upon the breezy air  
 All her rich luxuriant hair ;  
 Ever the burthen of her song,  
 " Raging, maddening, haste along  
 Bacchus' daughters, ye the pride  
 Of golden Tmolus' fabled side ;  
 While your heavy cymbals ring,  
 Still your 'Evoë ! Evoë !' sing !"

Evoë ! the Evian god rejoices  
 In Phrygian tones and Phrygian voices,  
 When the soft holy pipe is breathing sweet,  
 In notes harmonious to her feet,  
 Who to the mountain, to the mountain speeds ;  
 Like some young colt that by its mother feeds,  
 Gladsome with many a frisking bound,  
 The Bacchanal goes forth and treads the echoing ground.

TIR. Ho ! some one in the gates, call from his palace  
 Cadmus, Agenor's son, who, Sidon's walls  
 Leaving, built up this towered city of Thebes.  
 Ho ! some one say, "Tiresias awaits him."  
 Well knows he why I am here ; the covenant  
 Which I, th' old man, have made with him still older,  
 To lift the thyrsus wand, the fawn-skin wear,  
 And crown our grey hairs with the ivy leaves.

CAD. Best friend ! with what delight within my palace  
 I heard thy speech, the speech of a wise man !  
 Lo ! I am here, in the Gods' sacred garb ;  
 For needs must we, the son of mine own daughter,  
 Dionysus, now 'mongst men a manifest God,  
 Even to the utmost of our power extol.  
 Where shall we lead the dance, plant the light foot,  
 And shake the hoary locks ? Tiresias, thou  
 The aged lead the aged : wise art thou,  
 Nor will I weary night and day the earth  
 Beating with my lithe thyrsus. Oh, how sweetly  
 Will we forget we are old !

TIR. Thou'rt as myself :  
 I too grow young ; I too essay the dance.  
 CAD. Shall we, then, in our chariots seek the mountains ?  
 TIR. It were not the same homage to the God.  
 CAD. The old man still shall be the old man's tutor.  
 TIR. The God will guide us thither without toil.  
 CAD. Of all the land, join we alone the dance ?  
 TIR. All else misjudge ; we only are the wise.  
 CAD. Too long we linger ; hold thou fast mine hand.  
 TIR. Lo ! thus true yoke-fellows join hand with hand.  
 CAD. I, mortal, ~~born~~ may not despise the Gods.

TIR. No wile, no paltering with the deities.  
 The ancestral faith, coeval with our race,  
 No subtle reasoning, if it soar aloft  
 Even to the height of wisdom, can o'erthrow.  
 Some one will say that I disgrace mine age,  
 Rapt in the dance, and ivy-crowned my head.  
 The Gods admit no difference : old or young,  
 All it behoves to mingle in the rite.  
 From all he will receive the common honour,  
 Nor deign to count his countless votaries.

CAD. Since thou, Tiresias, seest not day's sweet light,  
 I, as thy Seer, must tell thee what is coming.  
 Lo, Pentheus, hurrying homewards to his palace,  
 Echion's son, to whom I have given the kingdom.  
 He is strangely moved ! What new thing will he say ?

PEN. I have been absent from this land, and hear  
 Of strange and evil doings in the city.  
 Our women all have left their homes, to join  
 These fabled mysteries. On the shadowy rocks  
 Frequent they sit, this God of yesterday,  
 Dionysus, whosoe'er he be, with revels  
 Dishonourable honouring. In the midst  
 Stand the crowned goblets ; and each stealing forth,  
 This way and that, creeps to a lawless bed ;  
 In pretext, holy sacrificing Mænads,  
 But serving Aphrodite more than Bacchus.  
 All whom I've apprehended, in their gyves  
 Our officers guard in the public prison.  
 Those that have 'scaped I'll hunt from off the mountains,  
 Ino, Agave who to Echion bare me,  
 Her too, Autonoe, Antæus' mother ;  
 And fettering them all in iron bonds,  
 I'll put an end to their mad wickedness.  
 'Tis said a stranger hath appeared among us,  
 A wizard, sorcerer, from the land of Lydia,  
 Beauteous with golden locks and purple cheeks,  
 Eyes moist with Aphrodite's melting fire.  
 And day and night he is with the throng, to guile  
 Young maidens to the soft inebriate rites.

But if I catch him 'neath this roof, I'll silence  
 The beating of his thyrsus, stay his locks'  
 Wild tossing, from his body severing his neck.  
 He, say they, is the new God, Dionysus,  
 That was sewn up within the thigh of Jove.  
 He, with his mother, guiltily that boasted  
 Herself Jove's bride, was blasted by the lightning.  
 Are not such deeds deserving the base halter?  
 Sin heaped on sin! whoe'er this stranger be.

But lo, new wonders! see I not Tiresias,  
 The prophet, in the dappled fawn-skin clad?  
 My mother's father too (a sight for laughter!)  
 Tossing his hair? My sire, I blush for thee,  
 Beholding thine old age thus fatuous grown.  
 Wilt not shake off that ivy? free thine hand  
 From that unseemly wand, my mother's father!  
 This is thy work, Tiresias. This new God  
 Wilt thou instal 'mongst men, at higher price  
 To vend new auspices, and well paid offerings.  
 If thine old age were not thy safeguard, thou  
 Shouldst pine in chains among the Bacchanal women.  
 False teacher of new rites! For where 'mong women  
 The grape's sweet poison mingles with the feast,  
 Nought holy may we augur of such worship.

CHOR. Oh impious! dost thou not revere the Gods,  
 Nor Cadmus, who the earth-born harvest sowed?  
 Echion's son! how dost thou shame thy lineage!

TIR. 'Tis easy to be eloquent, for him  
 That's skilled in speech, and hath a stirring theme.  
 Thou hast the flowing tongue as of a wise man,  
 But there's no wisdom in thy fluent words;  
 For the bold demagogue, powerful in speech,  
 Is but a dangerous citizen, lacking sense.  
 This the new deity thou laugh'st to scorn,  
 I may not say how mighty he will be  
 Throughout all Hellas. Youth! there are two things  
 Man's primal need, Demeter, the boon Goddess  
 (Or rather will ye call her Mother Earth?),  
 With solid food maintains the race of man.

He, on the other hand, the son of Semele,  
Found out the grape's rich juice, and taught us mortals  
That which beguiles the miserable of mankind  
Of sorrow, when they quaff the vine's rich stream.  
Sleep too, and drowsy oblivion of care  
He gives, all-healing medicine of our woes.  
He 'mong the gods is worshipped a great god,  
Author confessed to man of such rich blessings.  
Him dost thou laugh to scorn, as in Jove's thigh  
Sewn up. This truth profound will I unfold :  
When Jove had snatched him from the lightning-fire,  
He to Olympus bore the new-born babe.  
Stern Herè strove to thrust him out of heaven,  
But Jove encountered her with wiles divine :  
He clove off part of th' earth-encircling air,  
There Dionysus placed the pleasing hostage,  
Aloof from jealous Herè. So men said  
Hereafter he was cradled in Jove's thigh  
(From the assonance of words in our old tongue  
For thigh and hostage the wild fable grew).  
A prophet is our god, for Bacchanalism  
And madness are alike prophetic.  
And when the god comes down in all his power,  
He makes the mad to rave of things to come.  
Of Ares he hath attributes : he the host  
In all its firm array and serried arms,  
With panic fear scatters, ere lance cross lance :  
From Dionysus springs this frenzy too.

And him shall we behold on Delphi's crags  
Leaping, with his pine torches lighting up  
The rifts of the twin-headed rock ; and shouting  
And shaking all around his Bacchic wand  
Great through all Hellas. Pentheus, be advised !  
Vaunt not thy power o'er man, even if thou thinkest  
That thou art wise (it is diseased, thy thought),  
Think it not ! In the land receive the god.  
Pour wine, and join the dance, and crown thy brows.  
Dionysus does not force our modest matrons  
To the soft Cyprian rites ; the chaste by nature

Are not so cheated of their chastity.  
 Think well of this, for in the Bacchic choir  
 The holy woman will not be less holy.  
 Thou'rt proud, when men to greet thee throng the gates,  
 And the glad city welcomes Pentheus' name ;  
 He too, I ween, delights in being honoured.

I, therefore, and old Cadmus whom thou mock'st,  
 Will crown our heads with ivy, dance along  
 An hoary pair—for dance perforce we must ;  
 I war not with the gods. Follow my counsel ;  
 Thou'rt at the height of madness, there's no medicine  
 Can minister to disease so deep as thine.

CHOR. Old man ! thou sham'st not Phœbus thine own god.  
 Wise art thou worshipping that great god Bromius.

CAD. My son ! Tiresias well hath counselled thee ;  
 Dwell safe with us within the pale of law.  
 Now thou fliest high : thy sense is void of sense.  
 Even if, as thou declar'st, he were no god,  
 Call thou him god. It were a splendid falsehood  
 If Semele be thought t' have borne a god ;  
 'Twere honour unto us and to our race.  
 Hast thou not seen Actæon's wretched fate ?  
 The dogs he bred, who fed from his own board,  
 Rent him in wrath to pieces ; for he vaunted  
 Than Artëmis to be a mightier hunter.  
 So do not thou : come, let me crown thine head  
 With ivy, and with us adore the god.

PEN. Hold off thine hand ! Away ! Go rave and dance,  
 And wipe not off thy folly upon me.  
 On him, thy folly's teacher, I will wreak  
 Instant relentless justice. Some one go,  
 The seats from which he spies the flight of birds—  
 False augur—with the iron forks o'erthrow,  
 Scattering in wild confusion all abroad,  
 And cast his chaplets to the winds and storms ;  
 Thou'lt gall him thus, gall to the height of bitterness.  
 Ye to the city ! seek that stranger out,  
 That womanly man, who with this new disease  
*Attlicts our matrons, and defiles their beds :*

Seize him and bring him hither straight in chains,  
That he may suffer stoning, that dread death.  
Such be his woful orgies here in Thebes.

TIR. Oh, miserable ! That know'st not what thou sayest,  
Crazed wert thou, now thou'rt at the height of madness :  
But go we, Cadmus, and pour forth our prayer,  
Even for this savage and ungodly man,  
And for our city, lest the god o'ertake us  
With some strange vengeance.

Come with thy ivy staff,

Lean thou on me, and I will lean on thee :  
'Twere sad for two old men to fall, yet go  
We must, and serve great Bacchus, son of Jove.  
What woe, O Cadmus, will this woe-named man  
Bring to thine house ! I speak not now as prophet,  
But a plain simple fact : fools still speak folly.

CHOR. Holy goddess ! Goddess old !  
Holy ! thou the crown of gold  
In the nether realm that wearest,  
Pentheus' awful speech thou hearest,  
Hearest his insulting tone  
'Gainst Semele's immortal son,  
Bromius, of gods the first and best.  
At every gay and flower-crowned feast,  
His the dance's jocund strife,  
And the laughter with the fife,  
Every care and grief to lull,  
When the sparkling wine-cup full  
Crowns the gods' banquets, or lets fall  
Sweet sleep on the eyes of men at mortal festival.

Of tongue unbridled without awe,  
Of madness spurning holy law,  
Sorrow is the Jove-doomed close ;  
But the life of calm repose  
And modest reverence holds her state  
Unbroken by disturbing fate ;  
And knits whole houses in the tie  
Of sweet domestic harmony.



Beyond the range of mortal eyes  
 'Tis not wisdom to be wise.  
 Life is brief, the present clasp,  
 Nor after some bright future grasp.  
 Such were the wisdom, as I ween,  
 Only of frantic and ill-counselled men.

Oh, would to Cyprus I might roam,  
 Soft Aphrodite's isle,  
 Where the young loves have their perennial home,  
 That soothe men's hearts with tender guile :  
 Or to that wondrous shore where ever  
 The hundred-mouthed barbaric river  
 Makes teem with wealth the showerless land !  
 O lead me ! lead me, till I stand,  
 Bromius !—sweet Bromius !—where high swelling  
 Soars the Pierian muses' dwelling—  
 Olympus' summit hoar and high—  
 Thou revel-loving deity !

For there are all the graces,  
 And sweet desire is there,  
 And to those hallowed places  
 To lawful rites the Bacchanals repair.  
 The deity, the son of Jove,  
 The banquet is his joy,  
 Peace, the wealth-giver, doth he love,  
 That nurse of many a noble boy.  
 Not the rich man's sole possessing ;  
 To the poor the painless blessing  
 Gives he of the wine-cup bright.  
 Him he hates, who day and night,  
 Gentle night, and gladsome day,  
 Cares not thus to while away.  
 Be thou wisely unsevere !  
 Shun the stern and the austere !  
 Follow the multitude ;  
 Their usage still pursue !  
 Their homely wisdom rude  
 (*Such is my sentence*) is both right and true.

OFFICER. Pentheus, we are here ! In vain we went not forth ;  
 The prey which thou commandest we have taken.  
 Gentle our quarry met us, nor turned back  
 His foot in flight, but held out both his hands ;  
 Became not pale, changed not his ruddy colour.  
 Smiling he bade us bind, and lead him off,  
 Stood still, and made our work a work of ease.  
 Reverent I said, " Stranger, I arrest thee not  
 Of mine own will, but by the king's command."  
 But all the Bacchanals, whom thou hadst seized  
 And bound in chains within the public prison,  
 All now have disappeared, released they are leaping  
 In their wild orgies, hymning the god Bacchus.  
 Spontaneous fell the chains from off their feet ;  
 The bolts drew back untouched by mortal hand.  
 In truth this man, with many wonders rife  
 Comes to our Thebes. 'Tis thine t' ordain the rest.

PEN. Bind fast his hands ! Thus in his manacles  
 Sharp must he be indeed to 'scape us now.  
 There's beauty, stranger—woman-witching beauty  
 (Therefore thou art in Thebes)—in thy soft form ;  
 Thy fine bright hair, not coarse like the hard athlete's,  
 Is mantling o'er thy cheek warm with desire ;  
 And carefully thou hast cherished thy white skin ;  
 Not in the sun's swart beams, but in cool shade,  
 Wooing soft Aphrodite with thy loveliness.  
 But tell me first, from whence hath sprung thy race ?

DIO. There needs no boast ; 'tis easy to tell this :  
 Of flowery Tmolus hast thou haply heard ?

PEN. Yea ; that which girds around the Sardian city.

DIO. Thence am I come, my country Lydia.

PEN. Whence unto Hellas bringest thou thine orgies ?

DIO. Dionysus, son of Jove, hath hallowed them.

PEN. Is there a Jove then, that begets new gods ?

DIO. No, it was here he wedded Semele.

PEN. Hallowed he them by night, or in the eye of day ?

DIO. In open vision he revealed his orgies.

PEN. And what, then, is thine orgies' solemn form ?

DIO. That is not uttered to the uninitiate.

PEN. What profit, then, is theirs who worship him?

DIO. Thou mayst not know, though precious were that knowledge.

PEN. A cunning tale, to make me long to hear thee.

DIO. The orgies of our god scorn impious worshippers.

PEN. Thou saw'st the manifest god! What was his form?

DIO. Whate'er he would; it was not mine to choose.

PEN. Cleverly blinked our question with no answer.

DIO. Who wiseliest speaks, to the fool speaks foolishness.

PEN. And hither com'st thou first with thy new god!

DIO. There's no Barbarian but adores these rites.

PEN. Being much less wise than we Hellenians.

DIO. In this more wise. Their customs differ much.

PEN. Performest thou these rites by night or day?

DIO. Most part by night—night hath more solemn awe.

PEN. A crafty rotten plot to catch our women.

DIO. Even in the day bad men can do bad deeds.

PEN. Thou of thy wiles shalt pay the penalty.

DIO. Thou of thine ignorance—impious towards the gods!

PEN. He's bold, this Bacchus—ready enough in words.

DIO. What penalty? what evil wilt thou do me?

PEN. First will I clip away those soft bright locks.

DIO. My locks are holy, dedicate to my god.

PEN. Next, give thou me that thyrsus in thine hand.

DIO. Take it thyself; 'tis Dionysus' wand.

PEN. I'll bind thy body in strong iron chains.

DIO. My god himself will loose them when he will.

PEN. When thou invok'st him 'mid thy Bacchanals.

DIO. Even now he is present; he beholds me now.

PEN. Where is he then? Mine eyes perceive him not.

DIO. Near me: the impious eyes may not discern him.

PEN. Seize on him, for he doth insult our Thebes.

DIO. I warn thee, bind me not; the insane, the sane.

PEN. I, stronger than thou art, say I will bind thee.

DIO. Thou know'st not where thou art, or what thou art.

PEN. Pentheus, Agave's son, my sire Echion.

DIO. Thou hast a name whose very sound is woe.

PEN. Away, go bind him in our royal stable,

*That he may sit in midnight gloom profound:*

There lead thy dance ! But those thou hast hither led,  
 Thy guilt's accomplices, we'll sell for slaves ;  
 Or, silencing their noise and beating drums,  
 As handmaids to the distaff set them down.

DIO. Away then ! 'Tis not well I bear such wrong ;  
 The vengeance for this outrage he will wreak  
 Whose being thou deniest, Dionysus :  
 Outraging me, ye bind him in your chains.

CHOR. Holy virgin-haunted water !  
 Ancient Achelous' daughter !  
 Dirce ! in thy crystal wave  
 Thou the child of Jove didst lave.  
 Thou, when Zeus, his awful sire,  
 Snatched him from the immortal fire ;  
 And locked him up within his thigh,  
 With a loud but gentle cry—

“ Come, my Dithyrambus, come,  
 Enter thou the masculine womb ! ”

Lo ! to Thebes I thus proclaim,  
 “ Twice born ! ” thus thy mystic name.  
 Blessed Dirce ! dost thou well  
 From thy green marge to repel  
 Me, and all my jocund round,  
 With their ivy garlands crowned.

Why dost fly me ?

Why deny me ?

By all the joys of wine I swear,  
 Bromius still shall be my care.

Oh, what pride ! pride unforgiven  
 Manifests, against high heaven  
 Th' earth-born, whom in mortal birth  
 'Gat Echion, son of earth ;  
 Pentheus of the dragon brood,  
 Not of human flesh and blood ;  
 But portent dire, like him whose pride,  
 The Titan, all the gods defied.  
 Me, great Bromius' handmaid true ;  
 Me, with all my festive crew,

Thralled in chains he still would keep  
In his palace dungeon deep.

See'st thou this, O son of Jove,  
Dionysus, from above?  
Thy rapt prophets dost thou see  
At strife with dark necessity?

The golden wand

In thy right hand.

Come, come thou down Olympus' side,  
And quell the bloody tyrant in his pride.

Art thou holding revel now  
On Nysas' wild beast-haunted brow?  
Is't thy Thyasus that clammers  
O'er Corycia's mountain chambers?  
Or on Olympus, thick with wood,  
With his harp where Orpheus stood,  
And led the forest trees along,  
Led the wild beasts with his song.

O Pieria, blessed land,  
Evius hallows thee, advancing,  
With his wild choir's mystic dancing.

Over rapid Axios' strand  
He shall pass; o'er Lydia's tide  
Then his whirling Mænads guide.  
Lydia, parent boon of health,  
Giver to man of boundless wealth;  
Washing many a sunny mead,  
Where the prancing coursers feed.

DIO. What ho! what ho! ye Bacchanals!  
Rouse and wake! your master calls.

CHOR. Who is here? and what is he  
That calls upon our wandering train?

DIO. What ho! what ho! I call again!  
The son of Jove and Semele.

CHOR. What ho! what ho! our lord and master:  
Come, with footsteps fast and faster,  
Join our revel! Bromius, speed,  
Till quakes the earth beneath our tread.  
Alas! alas!

Soon shall Pentheus' palace wall  
Shake and crumble to its fall.

DIO. Bacchus treads the palace floor !  
Adore him !

CHOR. Oh ! we do adore !  
Behold ! behold !

The pillars with their weight above,  
Of ponderous marble, shake and move.  
Hark ! the trembling roof within  
Bacchus shouts his mighty din.

DIO. The kindling lamp of the dark lightning bring !  
Fire, fire the palace of the guilty king.

CHOR. Behold ! behold ! it flames ! Do ye not see,  
Around the sacred tomb of Semele,  
The blaze, that left the lightning there,  
When Jove's red thunder fired the air ?  
On the earth, supine and low,  
Your shuddering limbs, ye Mænads, throw !  
The king, the Jove-born god, destroying all,  
In widest ruin strews the palace wall.

DIO. O, ye Barbarian women, Thus prostrate in dismay ;  
Upon the earth ye've fallen ! See ye not, as ye may,  
How Bacchus Pentheus' palace In wrath hath shaken down ?  
Rise up ! rise up ! take courage—Shake off that trembling swoon.

CHOR. O light that goodliest shinest Over our mystic rite,  
In state forlorn we saw thee—Saw with what deep affright !

DIO. How to despair ye yielded As I boldly entered in  
To Pentheus, as if captured, Into the fatal gin.

CHOR. How could I less ? Who guards us If thou shouldst  
come to woe ?  
But how wast thou delivered From thy ungodly foe ?

DIO. Myself, myself delivered, With ease and effort slight.

CHOR. Thy hands, had he not bound them, In halters strong  
and tight ?

DIO. 'Twas even then I mocked him : He thought me in his  
chain ; [vain !  
He touched me not, nor reached me ; His idle thoughts were  
In the stable stood a heifer, Where he thought he had me bound :  
Round the beast's knees his cords And cloven hoofs he wound.

Wrath-breathing, from his body The sweat fell like a flood :  
 He bit his lips in fury, While I beside who stood  
 Looked on in unmoved quiet.

As at that instant come,  
 Shook Bacchus the strong palace, And on his mother's tomb  
 Flames kindled. When he saw it, On fire the palace deem'g,  
 Hither he rushed and thither, For "water, water," screaming ;  
 And every slave 'gan labour, But laboured all in vain.  
 The toil he soon abandoned. As though I had fled amain  
 He rushed into the palace : In his hand the dark sword gleamed.  
 Then, as it seemed, great Bromius—I say, but as it seemed—  
 In the hall a bright light kindled. On that he rushed, and there,  
 As slaying me in vengeance, Stood stabbing the thin air.  
 But then the avenging Bacchus Wrought new calamities ;  
 From roof to base that palace In smouldering ruin lies.  
 Bitter ru'ing our imprisonment, With toil forspent he threw  
 On earth his useless weapon. Mortal, he had dared to do  
 'Gainst a god unholy battle. But I, in quiet state,  
 Unheeding Pentheus' anger, Came through the palace gate.  
 It seems even now his sandal Is sounding on its way :  
 Soon is he here before us, And what now will he say ?  
 With ease will I confront him, Ire-breathing though he stand.  
 'Tis easy to a wise man To practise self-command.

PEN. I am outraged—mocked ! The stranger hath escap'd me  
 Whom I so late had bound in iron chains.  
 Off, off ! He is here !—the man ? How's this ? How stands he  
 Before our palace, as just issuing forth ?

DIO. Stay thou thy step ! Subdue thy wrath to peace !

PEN. How, having burst thy chains, hast thou come forth ?

DIO. Said I not—heardst thou not ? "There's one will fire  
 me !"

PEN. What one ? Thou speakest still words new and strange.

DIO. He who for man plants the rich-tendrilled vine.

PEN. Well layest thou this reproach on Dionysus.  
 Without there, close and bar the towers around !

DIO. What ! and the gods ! O'erleap they not all walls ?

PEN. Wise in all wisdom save in that thou shouldst have !

DIO. In that I should have wisest still am I.  
 But listen first, and hear the words of him

Who comes to thee with tidings from the mountains.  
Here will we stay. Fear not, we will not fly !

MES. Pentheus, that rulest o'er this land of Thebes !  
I come from high Cithæron, ever white  
With the bright glittering snow's perennial rays.

PEN. Why com'st thou ? On what pressing mission bound ?

MES. I've seen the frenzied Bacchanals, who had fled  
On their white feet, forth goaded from the land.  
I come to tell to thee and to this city  
The awful deeds they do, surpassing wonder.  
But answer first, if I shall freely say  
All that's done there, or furl my prudent speech ;  
For thy quick temper I do fear, O king,  
Thy sharp resentment and o'er-royal pride.

PEN. Speak freely. Thou shall part unharmed by me ;  
Wrath were not seemly 'gainst the unoffending.  
But the more awful what thou sayst of these  
Mad women, I the more on him, who hath guiled them  
To their wild life, will wreak my just revenge.

MES. Mine herds of heifers I was driving, slow  
Winding their way along the mountain crags,  
When the sun pours his full beams on the earth.  
I saw three bands, three choirs of women : one  
Autonoe led, thy mother led the second,  
Agave—and the third Ino : and all  
Quietly slept, their languid limbs stretched out :  
Some resting on the ash-trees' stem their tresses ;  
Some with their heads upon the oak-leaves thrown  
Careless, but not immodest ; as thou sayest,  
That drunken with the goblet and shrill fife  
In the dusk woods they prowl for lawless love.  
Thy mother, as she heard the hornéd steers  
Deep lowing, stood up 'mid the Bacchanals  
And shouted loud to wake them from their rest.  
They from their lids shaking the freshening sleep,  
Rose upright, wonderous in their decent guise,  
The young, the old, the maiden yet unwed.  
And first they loosed their locks over their shoulders,  
Their fawn-skins fastened, wheresoe'er the clasps



Had lost their hold, and all the dappled furs  
 With serpents bound, that lolled out their lithe tongues.  
 Some in their arms held kid, or wild-wolf's cub,  
 Suckling it with her white milk ; all the young mothers  
 Who had left their new-born babes, and stood with breasts  
 Full swelling : and they all put on their crowns  
 Of ivy, oak, or flowering eglantine.

One took a thyrsus wand, and struck the rock,  
 Leaped forth at once a dewy mist of water ;  
 And one her rod plunged deep in the earth, and there  
 The god sent up a fountain of bright wine.  
 And all that longed for the white blameless draught  
 Light scraping with their finger-ends the soil  
 Had streams of exquisite milk ; the ivy wands  
 Distilled from all their tops rich store of honey.

Hadst thou been there, seeing these things, the god  
 Thou now revil'st thou hadst adored with prayer.

And we, herdsmen and shepherds, gathered around.  
 And there was strife among us in our words  
 Of these strange things they did, these marvellous things.  
 One city-bred, a glib and practised speaker,  
 Addressed us thus : " Ye that inhabit here  
 The holy mountain slopes, shall we not chase  
 Agave, Pentheus' mother, from the Bacchanals,  
 And win the royal favour ? " Well to us  
 He seemed to speak ; so, crouched in the thick bushes,  
 We lay in ambush. They at the appointed hour  
 Shook their wild thyrsi in the Bacchic dance,  
 " Iacchus " with one voice, the son of Jove,  
 " Bromius " invoking. The hills danced with them ;  
 And the wild beasts : was nothing stood unmoved.  
 And I leaped forth, as though to seize on her,  
 Leaving the sedge where I had hidden myself.  
 But she shrieked out, " Ho, my swift-footed dogs !  
 These men would hunt us down, but follow me—  
 Follow me, all your hands with thyrsi armed."  
 We fled amain, or by the Bacchanals  
 We had been torn in pieces. They, with hands  
*Unarmed* with iron, rushed on the browsing steers.

One ye might see a young and vigorous heifer  
 Hold, lowing in her grasp, like prize of war.  
 And some were tearing asunder the young calves ;  
 And ye might see the ribs or cloven hoofs  
 Hurl'd wildly up and down, and mangled skins  
 Were hanging from the ash boughs, dropping blood.  
 The wanton bulls, proud of their tossing horns  
 Of yore, fell stumbling, staggering to the ground.  
 Dragged down by the strong hands of thousand maidens.  
 And swifter were the entrails torn away  
 Than drop the lids over your royal eyeballs.

Like birds that skim the earth, they glide along  
 O'er the wide plains, that by Asopus' streams  
 Shoot up for Thebes the rich and yellow corn :  
 And Hysiaë and Erythræ, that beneath  
 Cithæron's crag dwell lowly, like fierce foes  
 Invading, all with ravage waste and wide  
 Confounded ; infants snatched from their sweet homes ;  
 And what they threw across their shoulders, clung  
 Unfastened, nor fell down to the black ground.  
 No brass, nor ponderous iron : on their locks  
 Was fire that burned them not. Of those they spoiled  
 Some in their sudden fury rushed to arms.  
 Then was a mightier wonder seen, O king :  
 From them the pointed lances drew no blood.  
 But they their thyrsi hurling, javelin-like,  
 Drave all before, and smote their shameful backs :  
 Women drave men, but not without the god.

So did they straight return from whence they came,  
 Even to the fountains, which the god made flow ;  
 Washed off the blood, and from their cheeks the drops  
 The serpents licked, and made them bright and clean.  
 This godhead then, whoe'er he be, my master !  
 Receive within our city. Great in all things,  
 In this I hear men say he is the greatest—  
 He hath given the sorrow-soothing vine to man  
 For where wine is not love will never be,  
 Nor any other joy of human life.

CHOR. I am afraid to speak the words of freedom

Before the tyrant, yet it must be said :

"Inferior to no god is Dionysus."

PEN. 'Tis here then, like a wild fire, burning on,  
This Bacchic insolence, Hellas' deep disgrace.  
Off with delay ! Go to the Electrian gates  
And summon all that bear the shield, and all  
The cavalry upon their prancing steeds,  
And those that couch the lance, and of the bow  
Twang the sharp string. Against these Bacchanals  
We will go war. It were indeed too much  
From women to endure what we endure.

DIO. Thou wilt not be persuaded by my words,  
Pentheus ! Yet though of thee I have suffered wrong,  
I warn thee, rise not up against the god.  
Rest thou in peace. Bromius will never brook  
Ye drive his Mænads from their mountain haunts.

PEN. Wilt teach me ? Better fly and save thyself,  
Ere yet I wreak stern justice upon thee.

DIO. Rather do sacrifice, than in thy wrath  
Kick 'gainst the pricks—a mortal 'gainst a god.

PEN. I'll sacrifice, and in Cithæron's glens,  
As they deserve, a hecatomb of women.

DIO. Soon will ye fly. 'Twere shame that shields of brass  
Before the Bacchic thyrsi turn in rout.

PEN. I am bewildered by this dubious stranger ;  
Doing or suffering, he holds not his peace.

DIO. My friend ! Thou still mayest bring this to good end.

PEN. How so ? By being the slave of mine own slaves ?

DIO. These women—without force of arms, I'll bring them. .

PEN. Alas ! he is plotting now some wile against me !

DIO. But what if I could save thee by mine arts ?

PEN. Ye are all in league, that ye may hold your orgies.

DIO. I am in a league 'tis true, but with the god !

PEN. Bring out mine armour ! Thou, have done thy speech !

DIO. Ha ! wouldst thou see them seated on the mountains ?

PEN. Ay ! for the sight give thousand weight of gold.

DIO. Why hast thou fallen upon this strange desire ?

PEN. 'Twere grief to see them in their drunkenness.

DIO. Yet gladly wouldst thou see, what seen would grieve thee.

PEN. Mark well ! in silence seated 'neath the ash-trees.

DIO. But if thou goest in secret they will scent thee.

PEN. Best openly, in this thou hast said well.

DIO. But if we lead thee, wilt thou dare the way ?

PEN. Lead on, and swiftly ! Let no time be lost !

DIO. But first enwrap thee in these linen robes.

PEN. What, will he of a man make me a woman !

DIO. Lest they should kill thee, seeing thee as a man.

PEN. Well dost thou speak ; so spake the wise of old.

DIO. Dionysus hath instructed me in this.

PEN. How then can we best do what thou advisest ?

DIO. I'll enter in the house, and there array thee.

PEN. What dress ? A woman's ? I am ashamed to wear it.

DIO. Art thou not eager to behold the Mænads ?

PEN. And what dress sayst thou I must wrap around me ?

DIO. I'll smooth thine hair down lightly on thy brow.

PEN. What is the second portion of my dress ?

DIO. Robes to thy feet, a bonnet on thine head.

PEN. Wilt thou array me then in more than this ?

DIO. A thyrsus in thy hand, a dappled fawn-skin.

PEN. I cannot clothe me in a woman's dress.

DIO. Thou wilt have bloodshed, warring on the Mænads.

PEN. 'Tis right, I must go first survey the field.

DIO. 'Twere wiser than to hunt evil with evil.

PEN. How pass the city, unseen of the Thebans ?

DIO. We'll go by lone byways ; I'll lead thee safe.

PEN. Aught better than be mocked by these loose Bacchanals.

When we come back, we'll counsel what were best.

DIO. Even as you will : I am here at your command.

PEN. So let us on ; I must go forth in arms,

Or follow the advice thou givest me.

DIO. Women ! this man is in our net ; he goes

To find his just doom 'mid the Bacchanals.

Dionysus, to thy work ! thou'rt not far off ;

Vengeance is ours. Bereave him first of sense ;

Yet be his frenzy slight. In his right mind

He never had put on a woman's dress ;

But now, thus shaken in his mind, he'll wear it.

A laughing-stock I'll make him to all Thebes,

Led in a woman's dress through the wide city,

For those fierce threats in which he was so great.

But I must go, and Pentheus—in the garb  
Which wearing, even by his own mother's hand  
Slain, he goes down to Hades. Know he must  
Dionysus, son of Jove, among the gods  
Mightiest, yet mildest to the sons of men.

CHOR. O when, through the long night,

With fleet foot glancing white,

Shall I go dancing in my revelry,

My neck cast back, and bare

Unto the dewy air,

Like sportive fawn in the green meadow's glee?

Lo, in her fear she springs

Over th' encircling rings,

Over the well-woven nets far off and fast ;

While swift along her track

The huntsman cheers his pack,

With panting toil, and fiery storm-wind haste.

Where down the river-bank spreads the wide meadow,

Rejoices she in the untrod solitude.

Couches at length beneath the silent shadow

Of the old hospitable wood.

What is wisest ? what is fairest,

Of god's boons to man the rarest ?

With the conscious conquering hand

Above the foeman's head to stand.

What is fairest still is dearest.

Slow come, but come at length,

In their majestic strength,

Faithful and true, the avenging deities :

And chastening human folly,

And the mad pride unholy,

Of those who to the gods bow not their knees.

For hidden still and mute,

As glides their printless foot,

The impious on their winding path they hound.

For it is ill to know,

And it is ill to do,

Beyond the law's inexorable bound.

'Tis but light cost in his own power sublime  
 To array the godhead, whose'er he be ;  
 And law is old, even as the oldest time,  
 Nature's own unrepealed decree.

What is wisest ? what is fairest,  
 Of god's boons to man the rarest ?  
 With the conscious conquering hand  
 Above the foeman's head to stand.  
 What is fairest still is rarest.

Who hath 'scaped the turbulent sea,  
 And reached the haven, happy he !  
 Happy he whose toils are o'er,  
 In the race of wealth and power !  
 This one here, and that one there,  
 Passes by, and everywhere  
 Still expectant thousands over  
 Thousand hopes are seen to hover.  
 Some to mortals end in bliss ;  
 Some have already fled away :  
 Happiness alone is his  
 That happy is to-day.

DIO. Thou art mad to see that which thou shouldst not see,  
 And covetous of that thou shouldst not covet.  
 Pentheus ! I say, come forth ! Appear before me,  
 Clothed in the Bacchic Mænads' womanly dress ;  
 Spy on thy mother and her holy crew,  
 Come like in form to one of Cadmus' daughters.

PEN. Ha ! now indeed two suns I seem to see,  
 A double Thebes, two seven-gated cities ;  
 Thou, as a bull, seemest to go before me,  
 And horns have grown upon thine head. Art thou  
 A beast indeed ? Thou seem'st a very bull.

DIO. The god is with us ; unpropitious once,  
 But now at truce : now seest thou what thou shouldst see ?

PEN. What see I ? Is not that the step of Ino ?  
 And is not Agave there, my mother ?

DIO. Methinks 'tis even they whom thou behold'st ;

But, lo ! this tress hath strayed out of its place,  
Not as I braided it, beneath thy bonnet.

PEN. Tossing it this way now, now tossing that,  
In Bacchic glee, I have shaken it from its place.

DIO. But we, whose charge it is to watch o'er thee,  
Will braid it up again. Lift up thy head.

PEN. Braid as thou wilt, we yield ourselves to thee.

DIO. Thy zone is loosened, and thy robe's long folds  
Droop outward, nor conceal thine ankles now.

PEN. Around my right foot so it seems, yet sure  
Around the other it sits close and well.

DIO. Wilt thou not hold me for thy best of friends,  
Thus strangely seeing the coy Bacchanals ?

PEN. The thyrsus—in my right hand shall I hold it ?  
Or thus am I more like a Bacchanal ?

DIO. In thy right hand, and with thy right foot raise it.  
I praise the change of mind now come o'er thee.

PEN. Could I not now bear up upon my shoulders  
Cithæron's crag, with all the Bacchanals ?

DIO. Thou couldst if 'twere thy will. In thy right mind  
Erewhile thou wast not ; now thou art as thou shouldst be.

PEN. Shall I take levers, pluck it up with my hands,  
Or thrust mine arm or shoulder 'neath its base ?

DIO. Destroy thou not the dwellings of the nymphs,  
The seats where Pan sits piping in his joy.

PEN. Well hast thou said ; by force we conquer not  
These women. I'll go hide in yonder ash.

DIO. Within a fatal ambush wilt thou hide thee,  
Stealing, a treacherous spy, upon the Mænads.

PEN. And now I seem to see them there like birds  
Couching on their soft beds amid the fern.

DIO. Art thou not therefore set as watchman o'er them ?  
Thou'lt seize them—if they do not seize thee first.

PEN. Lead me triumphant through the land of Thebes !  
I, only I, have dared a deed like this.

DIO. Thou art the city's champion, thou alone.  
Therefore a strife thou wot'st not of awaits thee.  
Follow me ! thy preserver goes before thee ;  
Another takes thee hence.



PEN. Mean'st thou my mother?  
 DIO. Aloft shalt thou be borne.  
 PEN. O the soft carriage!  
 DIO. In thy mother's hands.  
 PEN. Wilt make me thus luxurious?  
 DIO. Strange luxury, indeed!  
 PEN. 'Tis my desert.  
 DIO. Thou art awful!—awful! Doomed to awful end!  
 Thy glory shall soar up to the high heavens!  
 Stretch forth thine hand, Agave!—ye her kin,  
 Daughters of Cadmus! To a terrible grave  
 Lead I this youth! Myself shall win the prize—  
 Bromius and I; the event will show the rest.  
 CHOR. Ho! fleet dogs and furious, to the mountains, ho!  
 Where their mystic revels Cadmus' daughters keep.  
 Rouse them, goad them out,  
 'Gainst him, in woman's mimic garb concealed,  
 Gazer on the Mænads in their dark rites unrevealed.  
 First his mother shall behold him on his watch below,  
 From the tall tree's trunk or from the wild scaur steep;  
 Fiercely will she shout—  
 "Who the spy upon the Mænads on the rocks that roam  
 To the mountain, to the mountain, Bacchanals, has come?"  
 Who hath borne him?  
 He is not of woman's blood—  
 The lioness!  
 Or the Lybian Gorgon's brood?  
 Come, vengeance, come, display thee!  
 With thy bright sword array thee!  
 The bloody sentence wreak  
 On the dissevered neck  
 Of him who god, law, justice hath not known,  
 Echion's earth-born son.

He, with thought unrighteous and unholy pride,  
 'Gainst Bacchus and his mother, their orgies' mystic mirth  
 Still holds his frantic strife,  
 And sets him up against the god, deeming it light  
 To vanquish the invincible of might.



Hold thou fast the pious mind ; so, only so, shall glide  
In peace with gods above, in peace with men on earth,  
Thy smooth painless life.

I admire not, envy not, who would be otherwise :  
Mine be still the glory, mine be still the prize,

By night and day  
To live of the immortal gods in awe ;  
Who fears them not  
Is but the outcast of all law.

Come, vengeance, come display thee !  
With thy bright sword array thee !  
The bloody sentence wreak  
On the dissevered neck

Of him who god, law, justice has not known,  
Echion's earth-born son.

Appear ! appear !  
Or as the stately steer !  
Or many-headed dragon be !

Or the fire-breathing lion, terrible to see.

Come, Bacchus, come 'gainst the hunter of the Bacchanals,  
Even now, now as he falls

Upon the Mænads' fatal herd beneath,  
With smiling brow,  
Around him throw

The inexorable net of death.

MES. O house most prosperous once throughout all Hellas !  
House of the old Sidonian !—in this land  
Who sowed the dragon's serpent's earth-born harvest—  
How I deplore thee ! I a slave, for still

Grieve for their master's sorrows faithful slaves.

CHOR. What's this ? Aught new about the Bacchanals ?

MES. Pentheus hath perished, old Echion's son.

CHOR. King Bromius, thou art indeed a mighty god !

MES. What sayst thou ? How is this ? Rejoicest thou,  
O woman, in my master's awful fate ?

CHOR. Light chants the stranger her barbarous strains ;  
I cower not in fear for the menace of chains.

MES. All Thebes thus void of courage deemest thou ?

CHOR. O Dionysus ! Dionysus ! Thebes  
Hath o'er me now no power.

MES. 'Tis pardonable, yet it is not well,  
Woman, in others' miseries to rejoice.

CHOR. Tell me, then, by what fate died the unjust—  
The man, the dark contriver of injustice ?

MES. Therapnæ having left the Theban city,  
And passed along Asopus' winding shore,  
We 'gan to climb Cithæron's upward steep—  
Pentheus and I (I waited on my lord),  
And he that led us on our quest, the stranger—  
And first we crept along a grassy glade,  
With silent footsteps, and with silent tongues,  
Slow moving, as to see, not being seen.  
There was a rock-walled glen, watered by a streamlet,  
And shadowed o'er with pines ; the Mænads there  
Sate, all their hands busy with pleasant toil ;  
And some the leafy thyrsus, that its ivy  
Had dropped away, were garlanding anew ;  
Like fillies some, unharnessed from the yoke ;  
Chanted alternate all the Bacchic hymn.  
Ill-fated Pentheus, as he scarce could see  
That womanly troop, spake thus : " Where we stand, stranger,  
We see not well the unseemly Mænad dance :  
But, mounting on a bank, or a tall tree,  
Clearly shall I behold their deeds of shame."

A wonder then I saw that stranger do.  
He seized an ash-tree's high heaven-reaching stem,  
And dragged it down, dragged, dragged to the low earth ;  
And like a bow it bent. As a curved wheel  
Becomes a circle in the turner's lathe,  
The stranger thus that mountain tree bent down  
To the earth, a deed of more than mortal strength.  
Then seating Pentheus on those ash-tree boughs,  
Upward he let it rise, steadily, gently  
Through his hands, careful lest it shake him off ;  
And slowly rose it upright to its height,  
Bearing my master seated on its ridge.  
There was he seen, rather than saw the Mænads,

More visible he could not be, seated aloft.  
The stranger from our view had vanished quite.  
Then from the heavens a voice, as it should seem  
Dionysus, shouted loud, "Behold! I bring,  
O maidens, him that you and me, our rites,  
Our orgies laughed to scorn; now take your vengeance."  
And as he spake, a light of holy fire  
Stood up, and blazed from earth straight up to heaven.  
Silent the air, silent the verdant grove  
Held its still leaves; no sound of living thing.  
They, as their ears just caught the half-heard voice,  
Stood up erect, and rolled their wondering eyes.  
Again he shouted. But when Cadmus' daughters  
Heard manifest the god's awakening voice,  
Forth rushed they, fleeter than the wingéd dove,  
Their nimble feet quick coursing up and down.  
Agave first, his mother, then her kin,  
The Mænads, down the torrent's bed, in the grove,  
From crag to crag they leaped, mad with the god.  
And first with heavy stones they hurled at him,  
Climbing a rock in front; the branches some  
Of the ash-tree darted; some like javelins  
Sent their sharp thyrsi through the sounding air,  
Pentheus their mark: but yet they struck him not;  
His height still baffled all their eager wrath.  
There sat the wretch, helpless in his despair.  
The oaken boughs, by lightning as struck off,  
Roots torn from the earth, but with no iron wedge,  
They hurled, but their wild labours all were vain.  
Agave spake, "Come all, and stand around,  
And grasp the tree, ye Mænads; soon we will seize  
The beast that rides thereon. He will ne'er betray  
The mysteries of our god." A thousand hands  
Were on the ash, and tore it from the earth:  
And he that sat aloft, down, headlong, down  
Fell to the ground, with thousand piteous shrieks,  
Pentheus, for well he knew his end was near.  
His mother first began the sacrifice,  
And fell on him. His bonnet from his hair

He threw, that she might know and so not slay him,  
 The sad Agave. And he said, her cheek  
 Fondling, "I am thy child, thine own, my mother !  
 Pentheus, whom in Echion's house you bare.  
 Have mercy on me, mother ! For his sins,  
 Whatever be his sins, kill not thy son."  
 She, foaming at the mouth, her rolling eyeballs  
 Whirling around, in her unreasoning reason,  
 By Bacchus all possessed, knew, heeded not.  
 She caught him in her arms, seized his right hand,  
 And, with her feet set on his shrinking side,  
 Tore out the shoulder—not with her own strength :  
 The god made easy that too cruel deed.  
 And Ino laboured on the other side,  
 Rending the flesh : Autonoe, all the rest,  
 Pressed fiercely on, and there was one wild din—  
 He groaning deep, while he had breath to groan,  
 They shouting triumph ; and one bore an arm,  
 One a still-sandalled foot ; and both his sides  
 Lay open, rent. Each in her bloody hand  
 Tossed wildly to and fro lost Pentheus' limbs.  
 The trunk lay far aloof, 'neath the rough rocks  
 Part, part amid the forest's thick-strewn leaves,  
 Not easy to be found. The wretched head,  
 Which the mad mother, seizing in her hands,  
 Had on a thyrsus fixed, she bore aloft  
 All o'er Cithæron, as a mountain lion's,  
 Leading her sisters in their Mænad dance.  
 And she comes vaunting her ill-fated chase  
 Unto these walls, invoking Bacchus still,  
 Her fellow-hunter, partner in her prey,  
 Her triumph—triumph soon to end in tears !  
 I fled the sight of that dark tragedy,  
 Hastening, ere yet Agave reached the palace.  
 Oh ! to be reverent, to adore the gods,  
 This is the noblest, wisest course of man,  
 Taking dread warning from this dire event.

CHOR.           Dance and sing  
                   In Bacchic ring,

Shout, shout the fate, the fate of gloom,  
 Of Pentheus, from the dragon born ;  
 He the woman's garb hath worn,  
 Following the bull, the harbinger, that led him to his doom.  
 O ye Theban Bacchanals !

Attune ye now the hymn victorious,  
 The hymn all glorious,  
 To the tear, and to the groan !  
 O game of glory !  
 To bathe the hands besprent and gory,  
 In the blood of her own son.

But I behold Agave, Pentheus' mother,  
 Nearing the palace with distorted eyes.  
 Hail we the ovation of the Evian god.

AGA. O ye Asian Bacchanals !

CHOR. Who is she on us who calls ?

AGA. From the mountains, lo ! we bear  
 To the palace gate  
 Our new-slain quarry fair.

CHOR. I see, I see ! and on thy joy I wait.

AGA. Without a net, without a snare,  
 The lion's cub, I took him there

CHOR. In the wilderness, or where ?

AGA. Cithæron—

CHOR. Of Cithæron what ?

AGA. Gave him to slaughter.

CHOR. O blest Agave !

AGA. In thy song extol me,

CHOR. Who struck him first ?

AGA. Mine, mine, the glorious lot.

CHOR. Who else ?

AGA. Of Cadmus—

CHOR. What of Cadmus' daughter ?

AGA. With me, with me, did all the race  
 Hound the prey.

CHOR. O fortunate chase !

AGA. The banquet share with me !

CHOR. Alas ! what shall our banquet be ?

AGA. How delicate the kid and young !

The thin locks have but newly sprung  
Over his forehead fair.

CHOR. Tis beauteous as the tame beasts' cherished hair.

AGA. Bacchus, hunter known to fame !

Did he not our Mænads bring  
On the track of this proud game ?

A mighty hunter is our king !  
Praise me ! praise me !

CHOR. 'Praise I not thee ?

AGA. Soon with the Thebans all, the hymn of praise  
Pentheus my son will to his mother raise :

For she the lion prey hath won,  
A noble deed and nobly done.

CHOR. Dost thou rejoice ?

AGA. Ay, with exulting voice  
My great, great deed I elevate,  
Glorious as great.

CHOR. Sad woman, to the citizens of Thebes  
Now show the conquered prey thou bearest hither.

AGA. Ye that within the high-towered Theban city  
Dwell, come and gaze ye all upon our prey,  
The mighty beast by Cadmus' daughter ta'en ;  
Nor with Thessalian sharp-pointed javelins,  
Nor nets, but with the white and delicate palms  
Of our own hands. Go ye, and make your boast,  
Trusting to the spear-maker's useless craft :  
We with these hands have ta'en our prey, and rent  
The mangled limbs of this grim beast asunder.

Where is mine aged sire ? Let him draw near !  
And where is my son Pentheus ? Let him mount  
On the broad stairs that rise before our house ;  
And on the triglyph nail this lion's head,  
That I have brought him from our splendid chase.

CAD. Follow me, follow, bearing your sad burthen,  
My servants—Pentheus' body—to our house ;  
The body that with long and weary search  
I found at length in lone Cithæron's glens ;  
Thus torn, not lying in one place, but wide  
Scattered amid the dark and tangled thicket.

Already, as I entered in the city  
 With old Tiresias, from the Bacchanals,  
 I heard the fearful doings of my daughter.  
 And back returning to the mountain, bear  
 My son, thus by the furious Mænads slain.  
 Her who Actæon bore to Aristæus,  
 Autonoe, I saw, and Ino with her  
 Still in the thicket goaded with wild madness.  
 And some one said that on her dancing feet  
 Agave had come hither—true he spoke ;  
 I see her now—O most unblessed sight !

AGA. Father, 'tis thy peculiar peerless boast  
 Of womanhood the noblest t' have begot—  
 Me—me the noblest of that noble kin.  
 For I the shuttle and the distaff left  
 For mightier deeds—wild beasts with mine own hands  
 To capture. Lo ! I bear within mine arms  
 These glorious trophies, to be hung on high  
 Upon thy house : receive them, O my father !  
 Call thy friends to the banquet feast ! Blest thou !  
 Most blest, through us who have wrought such splendid deeds.

CAD. Measureless grief ! Eye may not gaze on it,  
 The slaughter wrought by those most wretched hands.  
 Oh ! what a sacrifice before the gods !  
 All Thebes, and us, thou callest to the feast.  
 Justly—too justly, hath King Bromius  
 Destroyed us, fatal kindred to our house.

AGA. Oh ! how morose is man in his old age,  
 And sullen in his mien. Oh ! were my son  
 More like his mother, mighty in his hunting,  
 When he goes forth among the youth of Thebes  
 Wild beasts to chase ! But he is great alone,  
 In warring on the gods. We two, my sire,  
 Must counsel him against his evil wisdom.  
 Where is he ? Who will call him here before us  
 That he may see me in my happiness ?

CAD. Woe ! woe ! When ye have sense of what ye have  
 done,  
 With what deep sorrow, sorrow ye ! To th' end,

Oh ! could ye be, only as now ye are,  
Nor happy were ye deemed, nor miserable.

AGA. What is not well ? For sorrow what the cause ?

CAD. First lift thine eyes up to the air around.

AGA. Behold ! Why thus commandest me to gaze ?

CAD. Is all the same ? Appears there not a change ?

AGA. 'Tis brighter, more translucent than before.

CAD. Is there the same elation in thy soul ?

AGA. I know not what thou mean'st ; but I become  
Conscious—my changing mind is settling down.

CAD. Canst thou attend, and plainly answer me ?

AGA. I have forgotten, father, all I said.

CAD. Unto whose bed wert thou in wedlock given ?

AGA. Echion's, him they call the Dragon-born.

CAD. Who was the son to thy husband thou didst bear ?

AGA. Pentheus, in commerce 'twixt his sire and me.

CAD. And whose the head thou holdest in thy hands ?

AGA. A lion's ; thus my fellow-hunters said.

CAD. Look at it straight : to look on't is no toil.

AGA. What see I ? Ha ! what's this within my hands ?

CAD. Look on't again, again : thou wilt know too well.

AGA. I see the direst woe that eye may see.

CAD. The semblance of a lion bears it now ?

AGA. No : wretch, wretch that I am ; 'tis Pentheus' head !

CAD. Even ere yet recognized thou might'st have mourned him.

AGA. Who murdered him ? How came he in my hands ?

CAD. Sad truth ! Untimely dost thou ever come !

AGA. Speak ; for my heart leaps with a boding throb.

CAD. 'Twas thou didst slay him, thou and thine own sisters.

AGA. Where died he ? In his palace ? In what place ?

CAD. There where the dogs Actæon tore in pieces.

AGA. Why to Cithæron went the ill-fated man ?

CAD. To mock the god, to mock the orgies there.

AGA. But how and wherefore had we thither gone ?

CAD. In madness !—the whole city maddened with thee.

AGA. Dionysus hath destroyed us ! Late I learn it.

CAD. Mocked with dread mockery ; no god ye held him.

AGA. Father ! Where's the dear body of my son ?

CAD. *I bear it here, not found without much toil.*



AGA. Are all the limbs together, sound and whole?  
And Pentheus, shared he in my desperate fury?

CAD. Like thee he was, he worshipped not the god.  
All, therefore, are enwrapt in one dread doom.  
You, 'he, in whom hath perished all our house,  
And I who, childless of male offspring, see  
This single fruit—O miserable!—of thy womb  
Thus shamefully, thus lamentably dead—  
Thy son, to whom our house looked up, the stay  
Of all our palace he, my daughter's son,  
The awe of the whole city. None would dare  
Insult the old man when thy fearful face  
He saw, well knowing he would pay the penalty.  
Unhonoured now, I am driven from out mine home;  
Cadmus the great, who all the race of Thebes  
Sowed in the earth, and reaped that harvest fair.  
O best beloved of men, thou art now no more,  
Yet still art dearest of my children thou!  
No more, this grey beard fondling with thine hand,  
Wilt call me thine own grandsire, thou sweet child,  
And fold me round and say, "Who doth not honour thee?  
Old man, who troubles or afflicts thine heart?  
Tell me, that I may 'venge thy wrong, my father!"  
Now wretchedest of men am I. Thou pitiable—  
More pitiable thy mother—sad thy kin.  
O if there be who scorneth the great gods,  
Gaze on this death, and know that there are gods.

CHOR. Cadmus, I grieve for thee. Thy daughter's son  
Hath his just doom—just, but most piteous.

AGA. Father, thou seest how all is changed with me:

*I am no more the Maenad dancing blithe,  
I am but the feeble, fond, and desolate mother.  
I know, I see—ah, knowledge best unknown!  
Sight best unseen!—I see, I know my son,  
Mine only son!—alas! no more my son.  
O beauteous limbs, that in my womb I bare!  
O head, that on my lap wast wont to sleep!  
O lips, that from my bosom's swelling fount  
Drained the delicious and soft-oozing milk!*

*O hands, whose first use was to fondle me !  
 O feet, that were so light to run to me !  
 O gracious form, that men wondering beheld !  
 O haughty brow, before which Thebes bowed down !  
 O majesty ! O strength ! by mine own hands—  
 By mine own murderous, sacrilegious hands—  
 Torn, rent asunder, scattered, cast abroad !  
 O thou hard god ! was there no other way  
 To visit us ? Oh ! if the son must die,  
 Must it be by the hand of his own mother ?  
 If the impious mother must atone her sin,  
 Must it be but by murdering her own son ?*

DIO. Now hear ye all, Thebes' founders, what is woven  
 By the dread shuttle of the unerring Fates.  
 Thou, Cadmus, father of this earth-born race,  
 A dragon shalt become ; thy wife shalt take  
 A brutish form, and sink into a serpent,  
 Harmonia, Ares' daughter, whom thou wedd'st,  
 Though mortal, as Jove's oracle declares.  
 Thou in a car by heifers drawn shalt ride,  
 And with thy wife, at the Barbarians' head :  
 And many cities with their countless host  
 Shall they destroy, but when they dare destroy  
 The shrine of Loxias, back shall they return  
 In shameful flight ; but Ares guards Harmonia  
 And thee, and bears you to the Isles of the Blest.

This say I, of no mortal father born,  
 Dionysus, son of Jove. Had ye but known  
 To have been pious when ye might, Jove's son  
 Had been your friend ; ye had been happy still.

AGA. Dionysus, we implore thee ! We have sinned !

DIO. Too late ye say so ; when ye should, ye would not.

AGA. That know we now ; but thou'rt extreme in vengeance.

DIO. Was I not outraged, being a god, by you ?

AGA. The gods should not be like to men in wrath.

DIO. This Jove, my father, long hath granted me.

AGA. Alas, old man ! Our exile is decreed.

DIO. Why then delay ye the inevitable ?

CAD. O child, to what a depth of woe we have fallen !

Most wretched thou, and all thy kin beloved !  
 I too to the Barbarians must depart,  
 An aged denizen. For there's a prophecy,  
 'Gainst Hellas a Barbaric mingled host  
 Harmonia leads, my wife, daughter of Ares.  
 A dragon I, with dragon nature fierce,  
 Shall lead the stranger spearmen 'gainst the altars  
 And tombs of Hellas, nor shall cease my woes—  
 Sad wretch !—not even when I have ferried o'er  
 Dark Acheron, shall I repose in peace.

AGA. Father ! to exile go I without thee ?

CAD. Why dost thou clasp me in thine arms, sad child,  
 A drone among the bees, a swan worn out ?

AGA. Where shall I go, an exile from my country ?

CAD. I know not, child ; thy sire is a feeble aid.

AGA. Farewell, mine home ! Farewell, my native Thebes !  
 My bridal chamber ! Banished, I go forth.

CAD. To the house of Aristæus go, my child.

AGA. I wait for thee, my father !

CAD.

I for thee !

And for thy sisters.

AGA. Fearfully, fearfully, this deep disgrace,  
 Hath Dionysus brought upon our race.

im/ DIO. Fearful on ~~me~~ the wrong that ye had done ;  
 his/ Unhonoured was ~~my~~ name in Thebes alone.

AGA. Father, farewell !

CAD.

Farewell, my wretched daughter !

AGA. So lead me forth—my sisters now to meet,  
 Sad fallen exiles.

Let me, let me go,  
 Where cursed Cithæron ne'er may see me more,  
 Nor I the cursed Cithæron see again.  
 Where there's no memory of the thyrsus dance.  
 The Bacchic orgies be the care of others.

# ION.

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MERCURY.	XUTHUS.
ION.	OLD MAN.
CHORUS OF CREUSA'S FEMALE	SERVANT OF CREUSA.
ATTENDANTS.	PYTHIAN PRIESTESS.
CREUSA.	MINERVA.

SCENE—THE VESTIBULE OF APOLLO'S TEMPLE AT DELPHI.

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### MERCURY.

BY a celestial dame, was he who bears  
On brazen shoulders the incumbent load  
Of yonder starry heaven, where dwell the gods  
From ancient times, illustrious Atlas, sire  
To Maia, and from her I, Hermes, spring,  
The faithful messenger of mighty Jove.  
Now to this land of Delphi am I come,  
Where, seated on the centre of the world,  
His oracles Apollo to mankind  
Discloses, ever chaunting both events  
Present and those to come. Of no small note,  
In Greece, there is a city which derives  
Its name from Pallas, by her golden spear  
Distinguished. Phœbus in this realm compressed  
With amorous violence Erectheus' daughter,  
Creusa, underneath those craggy rocks  
North of Minerva's citadel, the kings  
Of Athens call them Macra. She endured,  
Without the knowledge of her sire (for such  
Was the god's will), the burden of her womb :

But at the stated time, when in the palace  
She had brought forth a son, she to that cave,  
Where she th' embraces of the god hath known,  
Conveyed and left the child, to death exposed,  
Lodged in the hollow of an orbéd chest,  
Observant of the customs handed down  
By her progenitors, and Erichonius,  
That earth-born monarch of her native land,  
Whom Pallas, daughter of imperial Jove,  
Placing two watchful dragons for his guard,  
To the three damsels from Agraulos sprung  
Entrusted. Hence, among Erectheus' race,  
E'en from those times, an usage hath prevailed  
Of nurturing, 'midst serpents wrought in gold,  
Their tender progeny. Creusa left,  
Wrapt round her infant, whom she thus to death  
Abandoned, all the ornaments she had.  
Then this request, on my fraternal love  
Depending, Phœbus urged: "My brother, go  
To those blest children of their native soil,  
The famed Athenians (for full well thou know'st  
Minerva's city), from the hollow rock  
Taking this new-born infant, and the chest  
In which he lies, with fillets swathed around,  
Convey to my oracular abode,  
And place him in the entrance of my fane:  
What still is left undone my care shall add:  
For know he is my son." I, to confer  
A kindness on my brother Phœbus, bore  
The wicker chest away; and, having oped  
Its cover that the infant might be seen,  
Just at the threshold of this temple lodged.  
But when the fiery coursers of the sun  
Rushed from heaven's eastern gate in swift career,  
Entering the mansion whence the god deals forth  
His oracles, a priestess on the child  
Fixed her indignant eyes, and wondered much  
What shameless nymph of Delphi could presume  
By *stealth* to introduce her spurious brood

Into Apollo's house. She was inclined  
 At first to cast him from the sacred threshold ;  
 But, by compassion moved, the cruel deed  
 Forbore, and, with paternal love, the god  
 Aided the child, nor from his hallowed mansion  
 Allowed him to be banished : him she took  
 And nurtured, though she knew not from what mother  
 He sprung, or that Apollo was his sire.  
 To both his parents, too, the boy himself  
 Remained a stranger. While he yet was young,  
 Around the blazing altars, whence he fed,  
 Playful he roamed ; but after he attained  
 Maturer years, the Delphic citizens  
 As guardian of the treasures of the god  
 Employed, and found him faithful to his trust :  
 Still in this fane he leads a holy life.  
 Meanwhile Creusa, who the infant bore,  
 Wedded to Xuthus : fortune this event  
 Thus brought to pass ; a storm of war burst forth  
 'Twixt the Athenian race and them who dwell  
 In Chalcis, on Eubœa's stormy coast.  
 In concert with the former having toiled,  
 And joined in the destruction of their foes,  
 A royal bride, Creusa, he obtained,  
 Though not in Athens but Achaia born,  
 The son of Æolus, who sprung from Jove.  
 He and his consort have been childless long,  
 And therefore to these oracles of Phœbus  
 Are come in quest of issue. This event  
 The god hath caused to happen, nor forgets  
 His son, as some suppose ; for he, on Xuthus,  
 Will, at his entering this prophetic dome,  
 Freely bestow, and call the stripling his ;  
 That when he comes to the maternal house,  
 Creusa may acknowledge him she bore,  
 While her amour with Phœbus rests concealed,  
 And this her son obtains th' inheritance  
 Of his maternal ancestors : through Greece  
 Th' immortal father hath decreed his son

Shall be called Ion, the illustrious founder  
Of Asiatic realms. But I must go  
Among the laurel's shadowy groves, and learn  
From this young prophet what the fates ordain ;  
For I behold Apollo's son come forth,  
To hang the branches of the verdant bay  
Before the portals of the fane. Now first  
Of all the gods I hail him by his name,  
The name of Ion which he soon shall bear.

[Exit MERCURY.]

ION. Now the resplendent chariot of the sun  
Shines o'er the earth : from its ethereal fires,  
Beneath the veil of sacred night, the stars  
Conceal themselves. Parnassus' cloven ridge,  
Too steep for human footsteps to ascend,  
Receives the lustre of its orient beams,  
And through the world reflects them ; while the smoke  
Of fragrant myrrh ascends Apollo's roof ;  
The Delphic priestess on the holy tripod  
Now takes her seat, and to the listening sons  
Of Greece, those truths in mystic notes unfolds,  
With which the gods inspire her labouring breast.  
But, O ye Delphic ministers of Phœbus,  
Now to Castalia's silver fount repair,  
And when ye have performed the due ablutions,  
Enter the temple ; let no word escape  
Your lips of evil omen, mildly greet  
Each votary, and expound the oracles  
In your own native language. But the toils  
Which I from childhood to the present hour  
Have exercised, with laureate sprays and wreaths  
Worn at our high solemnities, to cleanse  
The vestibule of Phœbus, I repeat,  
Sprinkling the pavement with these lustral drops,  
And with my shafts will I repel the flocks  
Of birds who taint the offerings of the god.  
For like a friendless orphan, who ne'er knew  
A mother's or a father's fostering care,  
In Phœbus' shrine which nurtured me, I serve.

ODE.

I.

In recent verdure ever gay,  
 Hail, O ye scions of the bay,  
     Which sweep Apollo's fane;  
 Cropt from the god's adjacent bowers,  
 Where rills bedew the vernal flowers,  
 And with perpetual streams refresh the plain;  
 The sacred myrtle here is found,  
 Whose branches o'er the consecrated ground  
     I wave, as day by day ascends  
     The sun with rapid wing,  
 Waking to toil which never ends,  
 And zealous in the service of my king.  
 O Pæan, Pæan, from Latona sprung,  
     Still mayst thou flourish blest and young!

II.

My labours with renown shall meet;  
 O Phœbus, the prophetic seat  
     Revering, at thy fane  
 A joyful minister I stand,  
 Serving with an officious hand  
 No mortal, but the blest immortal train.  
 Nor by these glorious toils opprest  
 Am I ignobly covetous of rest;  
 For dread Apollo is my sire;  
     To him, to him I owe  
 My being, nurtured in his choir,  
 And in the fostering god a father know.  
 O Pæan, Pæan, from Latona sprung,  
     Still mayst thou flourish blest and young!  
 But from this painful task will I desist,  
 And with the laurel cease to sweep the ground:  
 Next, from a golden vase, is it my office  
 To pour the waters of Castalia's fount,  
 Sprinkling its lustral drops: for I am free  
 From lust and its pollutions. May I serve



Apollo ever thus, or cease to serve him  
 When I some happier fortune shall attain !  
 But, ha ! the birds are here, and leave their nests  
 Upon Parnassus : wing not to this dome  
 Your flight, and on the gilded battlements  
 Forbear to perch. My arrows shall transpierce thee,  
 Herald of Jove, O thou, whose hookéd beak  
 Subdues the might of all the feathered tribes.  
 But lo ! another comes ! The swan his course  
 Steers to the altar. Wilt thou not retire  
 Hence with those purple feet ? Apollo's lyre,  
 In concert warbling with thy dulcet strains,  
 Shall not redeem thee from my bow : direct  
 Thy passage to the Delian lake—obey,  
 Or streaming blood shall interrupt thy song.  
 But what fresh bird approaches ? Would she build  
 Under these pinnacles a nest to hold  
 Her callow brood ? Soon shall the whizzing shaft  
 Repel thee. Wilt thou not comply ? Where Alpheus  
 Winds through the channeled rocks his passage, go,  
 And rear thy twittering progeny, or dwell  
 Amid the Isthmian groves, that Phœbus' gifts  
 And temples no defilement may receive.  
 For I am loth to take away your lives,  
 Ye wingéd messengers, who to mankind  
 Announce the will of the celestial powers.  
 But I on Phœbus must attend, performing  
 The task assigned me with unwearied zeal,  
 And minister to those who give me food.

## CHORUS, ION.

CHOR. 'Tis not in Athens only that the fane  
 Where duteous homage to the gods is paid,  
 Or altar for Agyian Phœbus reared  
 With many a stately column is adorned ;  
 But in these mansions of Latona's son  
 From those twin deities portrayed there beams  
 An equal splendour on the dazzled sight.

1st SEMICHOR. See there Jove's son who with his  
 golden fa'

Slays the Lernaean Hydra ! O my friend,  
Observe him well.

2nd SEMICHOR. I do.

1st SEMICHOR. Another stands  
Beside him brandishing a kindled torch.

2nd SEMICHOR. He whose exploits I on my woof described ?

1st SEMICHOR. The noble Iolaus, who sustained  
Alcides' shield, and in those glorious toils  
Was the sole partner with the son of Jove.  
Him also mark who on a wingéd steed  
Is seated, how with forceful arm he smites  
The triple-formed Chimæra breathing fire.

2nd SEMICHOR. With thee these eyes retrace each varied  
scene.

1st SEMICHOR. Look at the giants' conflict with the gods  
Depicted on the wall.

2nd SEMICHOR. There, there, my friends.

1st SEMICHOR. Behold'st thou her who 'gainst Enceladus  
The dreadful Ægis brandishes ?

2nd SEMICHOR. I see  
Pallas, my goddess.

1st SEMICHOR. And the forkéd flames,  
With which th' impetuous thunderbolt descends,  
Hurled from the skies by Jove's unerring arm ?

2nd SEMICHOR. I see, I see ! Its livid flashes smite  
Mimas the foe, and with his pliant thyrsus  
Another earth-born monster Bacchus slays.

CHOR. On thee I call, O thou who in this fane  
Art stationed : is it lawful to advance  
Into the inmost sanctuary's recess  
With our feet bare ?

ION. This cannot be allowed,  
Ye foreign dames.

CHOR. Wilt thou not answer me ?

ION. What information wish ye to receive ?

CHOR. Say, is it true that Phœbus' temple stands  
On the world's centre ?

ION. 'Tis with garlands decked,  
And Gorgons are placed round it.

CHOR. So fame tells.

ION. If ye before these portals have with fire  
Consumed the salted cates, and wish to know  
Aught from Apollo, to this altar come ;  
But enter not the temple's dread recess  
Till sheep are sacrificed.

CHOR. I comprehend thee ;  
Nor will we break the god's established laws,  
But with the pictures which are here without  
Amuse our eyes.

ION. Ye may survey them all  
At leisure.

CHOR. Hither have our rulers sent us,  
The sanctuary of Phœbus to behold.

ION. Inform me to what household ye belong.

CHOR. Minerva's city is the place where dwell  
Our sovereigns. But lo ! she herself appears  
To whom the questions thou hast asked relate.

CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

ION. Thy countenance, whoe'er thou be, O woman,  
Proves thou art noble, and of gentle manners :  
For by their looks we fail not to discern  
Those of exalted birth. But with amazement,  
Closing those eyes, thou strik'st me, and with tears  
Largely bedewing those ingenuous cheeks,  
Since thou hast seen Apollo's holy fane.  
Whence can such wayward grief arise ? The sight  
Of this auspicious sanctuary, which gives  
Delight to others, causes thee to weep.

CRE. Stranger, you well may wonder at my tears,  
For since I viewed these mansions of the god,  
I have been thinking of a past event ;  
And though myself indeed am here, my soul  
Remains at home. O ye unhappy dames !  
O most audacious outrages committed  
By the immortal gods ! To whom for justice  
Can we appeal, if, through the wrongs of those  
Who rule the world with a despotic power,  
*We perish ?*

ION.       What affliction unrevealed  
Makes thee despond ?

CRE. None. I have dropped the subject.  
What follows I suppress, nor must you seek  
To learn aught farther.

ION. But say, who thou art,  
Whence cam'st thou, in what region wert thou born,  
And by what name must we distinguish thee?

CRE. Creusa is my name, my sire Erectheus,  
In Athens first I drew my vital breath.

ION. O thou in that famed city who resid'st,  
And by illustrious parents hast been nurtured,  
How much do I revere thee !

CRE. I thus far,  
But in nought else, am blest.

ION. I by the gods  
Conjure thee, answer, if the world speak truth.

CRE. What question's this you would propose, O stranger?  
I wish to learn.

ION. Sprung the progenitor  
Of thy great father from the teeming earth?

CRE. Thence Ericthonius ; but my noble race  
Avails me not.

ION.           And did Minerva rear  
The warrior from the ground?

CRE. With virgin arms,  
For she was not his mother.

ION. Of the child  
Disposing as in pictures 'tis described?

CRE. To Cecrops' daughters him she gave for nurture,  
With strict injunctions never to behold him.

ION. I hear those virgins oped the wicker chest  
In which the goddess lodged him.

**CRE.** Hence their doom  
Was death, and with their gore they stained the rock.

ION. Let that too pass. But is this rumour true,  
Or groundless?

CRE. What's your question? for with leisure I am not overburdened.

ION. Did Erectheus,  
Thy royal father, sacrifice thy sisters ?

CRE. He feared not in his country's cause to slay  
Those virgins.

ION. By what means didst thou alone  
Of all thy sisters 'scape ?

CRE. A new-born infant,  
I still was in my mother's arms.

ION. Did earth  
Indeed expand her jaws, and swallow up  
Thy father ?

CRE. Neptune with his trident smote  
And slew him.

ION. Is the spot on which he died  
Called Macra ?

CRE. For what reason do you ask  
This question ? To my memory what a scene  
Have you recalled !

ION. Doth not the Pythian god  
Revere, and with his radiant beams adorn  
That blest abode ?

CRE. Revere ! But what have I  
To do with that ? Ah, would to heaven I ne'er  
Had seen the place !

ION. What then ! Dost thou abhor  
What Phœbus holds most dear ?

CRE. Not thus, O stranger ;  
Though I know somewhat base that has been done  
Under those caverns.

ION. What Athenian lord  
Received thy plighted hand ?

CRE. No citizen  
Of Athens ; but a sojourner, who came  
Out of another country.

ION. Who ? He sure  
Was of some noble lineage ?

CRE. Xuthus, son  
Of Æolus, who sprung from Jove.

ION. How gained  
*This foreigner the hand of thee, a native ?*

CRE. Eubœa is a region on the confines  
Of Athens.

ION. With the briny deep between,  
As fame relates.

CRE. Those bulwarks he laid waste,  
With Cecrops' race a comrade in the war.

ION. He thither came perhaps as an ally,  
And afterwards obtained thee for his bride.

CRE. In me the dower of battle, and the prize  
Of his victorious spear, did he receive.

ION. Alone, or with thy husband, art thou come  
These oracles to visit?

CRE. With my lord :  
But to Trophonius' cavern he is gone.

ION. As a spectator only, or t' explore  
The mystic will of Fate?

CRE. He hopes to gain  
From him and from Apollo one response.

ION. Seek ye the general fruit earth's bosom yields,  
Or children?

CRE. We are childless, though full long  
Have we been wedded.

ION. Hast thou never known  
The pregnant mother's throes? Art thou then barren?

CRE. Phœbus well knows I am without a son

ION. O wretched woman, who in all beside  
Art prosperous : Fortune here, alas, deserts thee.

CRE. But who are you? How happy do I deem  
Your mother !

ION. An attendant on the god  
They call me ; and, O woman, such I am.

CRE. Sent from your city as a votive gift,  
Or by some master sold?

ION. I know this only,  
That I am called Apollo's.

CRE. In return,  
I too, O stranger, pity your hard fate.

ION. Because I know not either of my parents.

CRE. Beneath this fane or some more lowly dome  
*Reside you?*

ION. This whole temple of the god  
Is my abode, here sleep I.

CRE. While an infant,  
Or since you were a stripling, came you hither?

ION. The persons who appear to know the truth  
Assert I was a child.

CRE. What Delphic nurse  
Performed a mother's office?

ION. I ne'er clung  
To any breast—she reared me.

CRE. Hapless youth,  
Who reared you? How have I discovered woes  
Which equal those I suffer!

ION. Phœbus' priestess,  
Whom as my real mother I esteem.

CRE. But how were you supported till you reached  
Maturer years?

ION. I at the altar fed,  
And on the bounty of each casual guest.

CRE. Whoe'er she was, your mother sure was wretched.

ION. Perhaps to me some woman owes her shame.

CRE. But say, what wealth you have? For you are drest  
In a becoming garb.

ION. I am adorned  
With these rich vestments by the god I serve.

CRE. Did you make no researches to discover  
Your parents?

ION. I have not the slightest clue  
To guide my steps.

CRE. Alas, another dame  
Like sufferings with your mother hath endured.

ION. Who? Tell me. Thy assistance wouldst thou give,  
I should rejoice indeed.

CRE. She for whose sake  
I hither came before my lord arrive.

ION. What are thy wishes in which I can serve thee?

CRE. I would obtain an oracle from Phœbus  
In private.

ION. Name it : for of all beside  
*Will I take charge.*

CRE. Now to my words attend—  
Yet shame restrains me.

ION. Then wilt thou do nothing :  
For Shame's a goddess not for action formed.

CRE. One of my friends informs me that by Phœbus  
She was embraced.

ION. A woman by Apollo !  
Use not such language, O thou foreign dame.

CRE. And that without the knowledge of her sire,  
She bore the god a son.

ION. This cannot be ;  
Her modesty forbids her to confess  
What mortal wronged her.

CRE. No ; she suffered all  
That she complains of, though her tale be wretched.

ION. In what respect, if by the bonds of love  
She to the god was joined ?

CRE. The son she bore  
She also did cast forth.

ION. Where is the boy  
Who was cast forth, doth he behold the light ?

CRE. None knows ; and for this cause would I consult  
The oracle.

ION. But if he be no more,  
How died he ?

CRE. Much she fears the beasts devoured  
Her wretched child.

ION. What proof hath she of this ?

CRE. She came where she exposed, and found him  
not.

ION. Did any drops of blood stain the path ?

CRE. None, as she says ; although full long she searched  
Around the field.

ION. But since that hapless boy  
Perished, how long is it ?

CRE. Were he yet living,  
His age would be the same with yours.

ION. The god  
Hath wronged her, yet the mother must be wretched.

CRE. Since that hath she produced no other child.



ION. But what if Phœbus bore away by stealth  
His son, and nurtured him?

CRE. He acts unjustly,  
Alone enjoying what to both belongs.

ION. Ah me! Such fortune bears a close resemblance  
To my calamity.

CRE. I make no doubt,  
O stranger, but your miserable mother  
Wishes for you.

ION. Revive not piteous thoughts  
By me forgotten.

CRE. I my question cease;  
Now finish your reply.

ION. Art thou aware  
In what respect thou hast unwisely spoken?

CRE. Can aught but grief attend that wretched dame?

ION. How is it probable the god should publish.  
By an oracular response, the fact  
He wishes to conceal?

CRE. If here he sit  
Upon his public tripod to which Greece  
Hath free access.

ION. He blushes at the deed;  
Of him make no inquiries.

CRE. The poor sufferer  
Bewails her fortunes.

ION. No presumptuous seer  
To thee this mystery will disclose: for Phœbus,  
In his own temple with such baseness charged,  
Justly would punish him who should expound  
To thee the oracle. Depart, O woman;  
For of th' immortal powers we must not speak  
With disrespect. This were the utmost pitch  
Of frenzy should we labour to extort  
From the unwilling gods those hidden truths  
They mean not to disclose, by slaughtered sheep,  
Before their altars, or the flight of birds.  
If 'gainst Heaven's will we strive to reach down blessings,  
In our possession they become a curse:

But what the gods spontaneously confer  
Is beneficial.

CHOR. In a thousand forms,  
A thousand various woes o'erwhelm mankind :  
But life can scarce afford one happy scene.

CRE. Elsewhere as well as here art thou unjust  
To her, O Phœbus, who though absent speaks  
By me. For thou hast not preserved thy son  
Whom thou wert bound to save ; nor wilt thou answer  
His mother's questions, prophet as thou art :  
That, if he be no more, there may a tomb  
For him be heaped, or haply, if he live,  
She may at length behold her dearest child.  
But now no more of this, if me the god  
Forbid to ask what most I wish to know.  
Conceal, O gentle stranger (for I see  
My lord the noble Xuthus is at hand,  
Who from the cavern of Trophonius comes),  
What thou hast heard, lest I incur reproach  
For thus divulging secrets, and my words,  
Not as I spoke them, should be blazed abroad :  
For the condition of our sex is hard,  
Subject to man's caprice ; and virtuous dames,  
From being mingled with the bad, are hated.  
Such, such is woman's miserable doom.

XUTHUS, CREUSA, ION, CHORUS.

XUT. I to the god begin t' address myself :  
Him first I hail ; and you my consort next.  
Hath my long stay alarmed you ?

CRE. No : thou com'st  
To her who is opprest with anxious thoughts.  
Say from Trophonius what response thou bring'st ;  
Doth hope of issue wait us !

XUT. He refused  
T' anticipate the prophecies of Phœbus ;  
All that he said was this : nor I, nor thou,  
Shall from this temple to our home return  
Thus destitute of children.

CRE. Holy mother  
Of Phœbus, to our journey grant success ;  
And O may fortune yet have bliss in store  
For those on whom thy son erst deigned to smile.

XUT. Thy vows shall be accomplished : but what prophet  
Officiates in this temple of the god ?

ION. I here without am stationed ; but within,  
O stranger, others near the tripod take  
Their seat, from Delphi's noblest citizens  
Chosen by lot.

XUT. 'Tis well : I have attained  
The utmost of my wishes, and will enter  
The sanctuary, for here before the temple,  
I am informed, the oracles in public  
To foreigners are uttered ; on this day  
(For 'tis a solemn feast) we mean to hear  
The god's prophetic voice. O woman, take  
Branches of laurel, and at every altar  
Offer up vows to the immortal powers,  
That I from Phœbus' temple may procure  
This answer, that my wishes shall be crowned  
With an auspicious progeny.

CRE. Depend  
On their completion : but were Phœbus' self  
Disposed to make atonement for past wrongs,  
He now, alas ! no longer can to me  
Entirely be a friend : yet I from him  
Whate'er he pleases am constrained to take,  
Because he is a god. [*Exeunt XUTHUS and CREUSA.*]

ION. In mystic words,  
Why doth this foreign dame, against our god  
Still glance reproaches, through a strong attachment  
To her for whom she hither to consult  
The oracle is come ; or doth she hide  
Some circumstance unfit to be disclosed ?  
But with Erectheus' daughter what concern  
Have I, what interest in th' Athenian realm ?  
I'll go and sprinkle from the golden vase  
The lustral waters. Yet must I condemn

Phœbus : what means he ? To the ravished maid  
 Unfaithful hath he proved : his son, by stealth  
 Begotten, left neglected to expire.  
 Act thou not thus ; but since thou art supreme  
 In majesty, let virtue too be thine.  
 For whosoever of the human race  
 Transgresses, with severity the gods  
 Punish his crimes : then how can it be just  
 For you, whose written laws mankind obey,  
 Yourselves to break them ? Though 'twill never be,  
 This supposition will I make, that thou,  
 Neptune, and Jove, who in the heaven bears rule,  
 Should make atonement to mankind for those  
 Whom ye have forcibly deflow'ed ; your temples  
 Must ye exhaust to pay the fines imposed  
 On your base deeds : for when ye follow pleasure,  
 Heedless of decency, ye act amiss ;  
 No longer is it just to speak of men  
 As wicked, if the conduct of the gods  
 We imitate : our censures rather ought  
 To fall on those who such examples give. [Exit ION.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

O thou who aid'st the matron's throes,  
 Come Eilithya, for to thee I sue ;  
 Minerva next with honours due  
 I hail, who by Prometheus' aid arose  
 In arms refulgent from the front of Jove,  
 Nor knew a mother's fostering love ;  
 Victorious queen, armed with resistless might,  
 O'er Pythian fanes thy plumage spread,  
 Forsake awhile Olympus' golden bed,  
 O wing thy rapid flight  
 To this blest land where Phœbus reigns,  
 This centre of the world his chosen seat,  
 Where from his tripod in harmonious strains  
 Doth he th' unerring prophecy repeat :

With Latona's daughter join,  
 For thou like her art spotless and divine ;  
 Sisters of Phœbus, with persuasive grace,  
 Ye virgins sue, nor sue in vain,  
 That, from his oracles, Erectheus' race  
 To the Athenian throne a noble heir may gain.

## II.

Object of Heaven's peculiar care  
 Is he whose children, vigorous from their birth,  
 Nursed on the foodful lap of earth,  
 Adorn his mansion and his transports share :  
 No patrimonial treasures can exceed  
 Theirs who by each heroic deed  
 Augment the fame of an illustrious sire,  
 And to their children's children leave  
 Th' invaluable heritage entire.  
 In troubles we receive  
 From duteous sons a timely aid,  
 And social pleasure in our prosperous hours.  
 The daring youth, in brazen arms arrayed  
 Guards with protended lance his native towers.  
 To lure these eyes, though gold were spread,  
 Though Hymen wantoned on a regal bed,  
 Such virtuous offspring would my soul prefer.  
 The lonely childless life I hate,  
 And deem that they who choose it greatly err,  
 Blest with a teeming couch, I ask no kingly state.

## III.

Ye shadowy groves where sportive Pan is seen,  
 Stupendous rocks whose pine-clad summits wave,  
 Where oft near Macra's darksome cave,  
 Light spectres, o'er the consecrated green,  
 Agraules' daughters lead the dance  
 Before the portals of Minerva's fane  
 To the shrill flute's varied strain.  
 When from thy caverns, through the vale around,  
 O Pan, the cheering notes resound.  
 Under those hanging cliffs (abhorred mischance !

Some nymph a son to Phœbus bore,  
 Whom she to ravenous birds a bloody feast  
 Exposed, and to each savage beast ;  
 Her shame, her conscious guilt, deplore.  
 Nor at my loom, nor by the voice of Fame  
 Have I e'er heard it said,  
 The base-born issue of some human maid,  
 Begotten by a god, to bliss have any claim.

ION, CHORUS.

ION. O ye attendants on your noble mistress,  
 Who watch around the basis of this fane,  
 Say, whether Xuthus have already left  
 The tripod and oracular recess,  
 Or in the temple doth he stay to ask  
 More questions yet about his childless state ?

CHOR. He is within, nor yet hath passed the threshold  
 Of these abodes, O stranger : but we hear  
 The sounding hinges of yon gates announce  
 His coming forth : and see, my lord advances !

XUTHUS, ION, CHORUS.

XUT. On thee, my son, may every bliss attend :  
 For such an introduction suits my speech.

ION. With me all's well : but learn to think aright,  
 And we shall both be happy.

XUT. Give thy hand,  
 And suffer me t' embrace thee.

ION. Are your senses  
 Yet unimpaired, or hath the secret curse  
 Some god inflicts, O stranger, made you frantic ?

XUT. In my right mind am I, if having found  
 Him whom I hold most dear, I wish t' embrace him.

ION. Desist, nor touch me, lest your rude hand tear  
 The garlands of the god.

XUT. Now in these arms  
 Thee I have caught, no pledge will I receive ;  
 For I've discovered my beloved son.

ION. Wilt thou not leave me, ere these shafts transpierce  
 Your vitals ?

XUT. But why shun me, now thou know'st  
That I to thee by such strong ties am bound?

ION. Because to me it is no welcome office  
Foolish and frantic strangers to recall  
To their right reason.

XUT. Take my life away,  
And burn my corse; but if thou kill me, thou  
Wilt be thy father's murderer.

ION. How are you  
My father? Is not this ridiculous?

XUT. In a few words to thee would I explain  
Our near connection.

ION. What have you to say?

XUT. I am thy sire, and thou art my own son.

ION. Who told you this?

XUT. Apollo, by whose care  
Thou, O my son, wert nurtured in this fane.

ION. You for yourself bear witness.

XUT. Having searched  
The oracles of this unerring god—

ION. Some phrase of dubious import have you heard,  
Which hath misled you.

XUT. Heard I not aright?

ION. What said Apollo?

XUT. That the man who meets me—

ION. Where?

XUT. As I from the temple of the god  
Am going forth.

ION. What fortunes him await?

XUT. Those of my son.

ION. By birth or through adoption?

XUT. A gift and my own child.

ION. Am I the first  
You light on?

XUT. I have met none else, my son.

ION. Whence springs this strange vicissitude of fortune?

XUT. The same event with wonder strikes us both.

ION. To you, what mother bore me?

XUT. This I know not.

- ION. Did not Apollo say?  
 XUT. I was delighted  
 With what he had revealed, and searched no farther.  
 ION. From mother earth I surely sprung.  
 XUT. The ground  
 Brings forth no children.  
 ION. How can I be yours?  
 XUT. I know not; but refer thee to the god.  
 ION. Some other subject let us now begin.  
 XUT. This is a topic, O my son, to me  
 Most interesting.  
 ION. The joys of lawless love  
 Have you experienced?  
 XUT. Yes, through youthful folly.  
 ION. Ere you were wedded to Erectheus' daughter?  
 XUT. Not ever since.  
 ION. Did you beget me then?  
 XUT. The time just tallies.  
 ION. But how came I hither?  
 XUT. This quite perplexes.  
 ION. From a distant land?  
 XUT. In this I also find new cause for doubt.  
 ION. Did you ascend erewhile the Pythian rock?  
 XUT. To celebrate the festivals of Bacchus.  
 ION. But to what host did you repair?  
 XUT. The same  
 Who me with Delphic maids—  
 ION. Initiated?  
 Or what is it you mean?  
 XUT. The Mænades  
 Of Bromius too.  
 ION. While sober, or o'erpowered  
 By wine?  
 XUT. The joys of Bacchus had ensnared me.  
 ION. Hence it appears I was begotten then.  
 XUT. Fate hath at length discovered thee, my son.  
 ION. But to this fane how could I come?  
 XUT. The nymph  
 Perhaps exposed thee.



ION. I from servitude  
Have made a blest escape.

XUT. Now, O my son,  
Embrace thy sire.

ION. I ought not to distrust  
The god.

XUT. Thou think'st aright.

ION. And is there aught  
That I can wish for more—

XUT. Thou now behold'st  
As much as it concerns thee to behold.

ION. Than from Jove's son to spring?

XUT. Which is thy lot.

ION. May I embrace the author of my birth?

XUT. To the god yielding credence.

ION. Hail, my father.

XUT. With ecstasy that title I receive.

ION. This day—

XUT. Hath made me happy.

ION. My dear mother,  
Shall I e'er see thee? More than ever now  
(Be who thou wilt) I for that moment long.  
But thou perhaps art dead, and I for thee  
Can now do nothing.

CHOR. With our monarch's house  
We share the glad event: yet could I wish  
My royal mistress and Erechtheus' race  
With children had been blest.

XUT. The god, my son,  
In thy discovery hath done well; to him  
I owe this happy union. Thou too find'st  
A father, though thou never knew'st till now  
By whom thou wert begotten: with thy wishes  
Mine, O my son, conspire, that thou mayst find  
Thy mother, and that I may learn who bore thee.  
By leaving this to time, we may at length  
Perhaps discover her: but now forsaking  
Apollo's temple and this exiled state,  
With duteous zeal accompany thy sire

To Athens, where this heritage awaits thee,  
 A prosperous sceptre and abundant wealth :  
 Nor though thou want one parent, can the name,  
 Or of ignoble, or of poor be thine :  
 But for thy noble birth shalt thou be famed,  
 And thy abundant treasures. Art thou silent ?  
 Why dost thou fix thine eyes upon the ground ?  
 Thy anxious thoughts return, and thou, thus changed  
 From thy past cheerfulness, alarm'st my soul.

ION. Things at a distance wear not the same semblance  
 As when on them we fix a closer view.

I certainly with gratitude embrace  
 My better fortunes, having found in you  
 A father. But whence rose my anxious thoughts  
 Now hear : in Athens, I am told, a native  
 Is deemed a glorious name, not so the race  
 Of aliens. I its gates shall enter laden  
 With these two evils ; from a foreign sire  
 Descended, and myself a spurious child.  
 Branded with this reproach, doomed to continue  
 In base obscurity, I shall be called  
 A man of no account : but if intruding  
 Into the highest stations in the city,  
 I aim at being great, I shall incur  
 Hate from the vulgar, for superior power  
 Is to the people odious ; but the friends  
 Of virtue, they whose elevated souls  
 With real wisdom are endued, observe  
 A modest silence, nor with eager haste  
 Rush into public business ; such as these  
 Will laugh and brand me with an idiot's name,  
 For not remaining quiet in a land  
 Which with tumultuous outrages abounds.  
 Again, will those of a distinguished rank  
 Who at the helm preside, when I attempt  
 To raise myself to honours, be most wary  
 How on an alien they their votes confer,  
 For thus, my sire, 'tis ever wont to be ;  
 They who possess authority and rank

Loathe their competitors. But when I come,  
Unwelcome stranger, to a foreign house  
And to the childless matron—partner once  
In your calamity, of all her hopes  
Now reft—with bitter anguish will she feel  
In private this misfortune : by what means  
Can I escape her hatred, at your footstool  
When I am seated, but she, still remaining  
A childless consort, with malignant eyes  
The object of your tenderness beholds ?  
Then or, betraying me, will you regard  
Your wife : or by th' esteem for me exprest,  
A dire confusion in your palace cause.  
For men, by female subtlety, how oft  
Have poisons been invented to destroy ;  
Yet is my pity to your consort due,  
Childless and hastening to the vale of years ;  
Sprung from heroic sires she ill deserves  
To pine through want of issue. But the face  
Of empire whom we foolishly commend  
Is fair indeed, though in her mansions Grief  
Hath fixed her loathed abode. For who is happy,  
Who fortunate, when his whole life is spent  
In circumspection and in anxious fears ?  
Rather would I in an ignoble state  
Live blest, than be a monarch who delights  
In evil friends, and hates the good, still fearing  
The stroke of death. Perhaps you will reply  
That gold can all these obstacles surmount,  
And to grow rich is sweet. I would not hear  
Tumultuous sounds, or grievous toils endure,  
Because these hands my treasures still retain.  
May I possess an humbler rank exempt  
From sorrow ! O my sire, let me describe  
The blessings I have here enjoyed ; first ease,  
To man most grateful ; by the busy crowd  
I seldom was molested, from my path  
No villain drove me : not to be endured  
*Is this, when we to base competitors*

Are forced to yield pre-eminence. I prayed  
Fervently to the gods, or ministered  
To mortals, and with those who did rejoice  
I never grieved. Some strangers I dismissed,  
But others came. Hence a new object still  
Did I remain, and each new votary please.  
What men are bound to wish for, even they  
Who with reluctance practise what they ought,  
The laws conspired to aid my natural bent,  
And in the sight of Phœbus made me just.  
These things maturely weighing in my breast,  
I deem my situation here exceeds  
What Athens can bestow. Allow me then  
The privilege of living to myself :  
For 'tis an equal blessing, or to taste  
The splendid gifts of fortune with delight,  
Or in an humbler station rest content.

CHOR. Well hast thou spoken : could thy words conduce  
To the felicity of those I love !

XUT. Cease to speak thus, and learn how to be happy :

For on the spot where thee I found, my son,  
Will I perform due rites, the social board  
Crown with a public banquet, and slay victims  
In celebration of thy natal day,  
Which with no sacrifice hath yet been graced.  
But now conducting thee, as if a guest  
Entered my doors, thee with a splendid feast  
Will I regale, and to th' Athenian realm  
Lead thee as one who comes to view the land,  
Not as my son ; because I would not grieve  
My consort, who is childless, while myself  
In thee am blest : yet will I seize at length  
Some happy moment, and on her prevail  
To let thee wield my sceptre. By the name  
Of Ion, I accost thee, which best suits  
Th' event that happened, since, as I came forth  
From Phœbus' temple, thou didst meet me first.  
Collecting *therefore* all thy band of friends,  
*Previous to thy departure from the city*



That lord in whom her hopes were placed?  
 But he is happy now, while she descends  
 Through misery to the vale of years in haste :  
     Disdained by all his virtuous friends  
     Shall Xuthus droop, through fortune's power,  
 To our rich mansions, who a stranger came,  
 Nor duly prized her gift, the royal dower :  
 Perish the traitor to our honoured dame !  
 Ne'er may his incense to the gods ascend !  
 Creusa shall know this. I am our sovereign's friend.

## III.

With his new son th' exulting sire  
 Already to the festive banquet hies,  
     Where steep Parnassus' hills aspire,  
     Whose rocky summits touch the skies,  
     Where Bacchus lifts a blazing pine,  
     And the gay Mænades to join  
 His midnight dances haste. With footsteps rude  
     Ne'er may this boy intrude  
 Into my city : rather may he die,  
     And quit life's radiant morn :  
     For groaning Athens would with scorn  
 And jealous eyes the alien view,  
 Should Xuthus' fraud such cause for scorn supply.  
     Enough for her that o'er her plain  
 Erst did Erectheus stretch a wide domain,  
 Still be each patriot to his children true.

## CREUSA, OLD MAN, CHORUS.

CRE. Thou venerable man, who didst attend  
 Erectheus the deceased, my honoured sire,  
 Now mount the god's oracular abode,  
 That thou my joys, if Phœbus, mighty king,  
 The birth of children shall foretell, mayst share.  
 For surely to be happy with our friends  
 Is most delightful : but (which Heaven forbid !)  
 Should any evil happen, to behold  
 The face of a benignant man is sweet.

For though I am thy queen, as thou didst erst  
 Honour my father, in that father's stead  
 I reverence those grey hairs.

OLD MAN.                                You still retain  
 A courtesy of manners, which, O daughter,  
 Suits your illustrious lineage : you belie not  
 Those first great ancestors from whom you spring,  
 Sons of the teeming earth. O lead me, guide  
 To the prophetic mansion, for to me  
 Th' ascent is steep : but let thy needful aid  
 Support me while with aged steps I move.

CRE. Follow me now, look where thou tread'st.

OLD MAN.                                These feet  
 Indeed are tardy, but my zeal is swift.

CRE. Lean on thy staff, while up the winding path  
 Thou striv'st to climb.

OLD MAN.                                'Tis darkness all, my eyesight  
 So fails me.

CRE.                    Thou speak'st truth, but let not this  
 Make thee dejected.

OLD MAN.                                Not with my consent  
 Thus do I suffer ; but on me, though loth,  
 What Heaven inflicts have I no power to heal.

CRE. Ye faithful females, who have served me long,  
 Attending at the distaff or the loom,  
 What fortunes to my husband were revealed ?  
 Left he the temple with a blest assurance  
 Of children, whom t' obtain we hither came ?  
 Inform me : for with acceptable tidings  
 If ye can greet me, ye will not confer  
 Such favour on a mistress who distrusts  
 The truth of what ye utter.

CHOR.                                        Ruthless fate !

CRE. This prelude to your speech is inauspicious.

CHOR. Ah, wretched me ! But wherefore am I wounded  
 By oracles that to my lords belong ?  
 No more ! Why should I venture to relate  
 A tale for which my recompense is death ?

CRE. What means this plaint, and whence arise your  
*fears ?*

CHOR. Shall we speak out, shall we observe strict silence,  
Or how shall we proceed?

CRE. Tell what you know  
Of the misfortune which invades your queen.

CHOR. Yes, thou shouldst hear it all, though twofold death  
Awaited me. Ne'er shall those arms sustain,  
Nor to thy bosom shalt thou ever clasp,  
The wished-for progeny.

OLD MAN. Alas, my daughter,  
Would I were dead!

CRE. Wretch that I am! The woes  
Ye have revealed, my friends, make life a curse.

OLD MAN. We perish, O my daughter!

CRE. Grief, alas!  
Pierces my vitals.

OLD MAN. Those untimely groans  
Suppress.

CRE. My plaints unbidden force their way.

OLD MAN. Before we learn—

CRE. Alas, what farther tidings  
Can I expect?

OLD MAN. Whether our lord endure  
The same, and share your woes, or you alone  
To adverse fortune are exposed.

CHOR. On him,  
Thou aged man, Apollo hath bestowed  
A son; this blessing singly he enjoys  
Without his consort.

CRE. You to me unfold  
The greatest of all evils, an affliction  
Which claims my groans.

OLD MAN. But is the son you speak of  
To spring hereafter from some dame unknown,  
Or did Apollo's oracle declare  
That he is born already?

CHOR. To thy lord  
Phoebus an offspring gives, already born,  
Who hath attained the age of blooming manhood:  
For I was present.

CRE. What is this you say?



To me have you related such a tale  
As no tongue ought to utter.

OLD MAN. And to me.

CRE. But by what means, yet undisclosed, the god  
This oracle to its completion brings,  
Inform me more explicitly, and who  
This stripling is.

CHOR. Apollo to thy husband  
Gave for a son him whom he first should meet,  
As from the temple of the god he came.

CRE. But as for me, alas ! through my whole life  
Accursed and sentenced to a childless state,  
In solitary mansions shall I dwell.

What youth was by the oracle designed ?  
Whom did the husband of unhappy me  
Meet in his passage—how, or where behold him ?

CHOR. Know'st thou that stripling, O my dearest queen,  
Who swept the temple ? He is Xuthus' son.

CRE. Ah, would to Heaven that I could wing my flight.  
Through the dark air beyond the Grecian land  
To the Hesperian stars ! How great, how great  
Are the afflictions I endure !

OLD MAN. What name  
His father gave him, know you, or is this  
Yet undetermined ?

CHOR. Ion was he called,  
Because he first his happy father met.

OLD MAN. Who was his mother ?

CHOR. That I cannot tell :  
But to acquaint thee, O thou aged man,  
With all that's in my power, her husband went,  
In privacy to offer up a victim  
For the discovery, and the natal day  
Of his new son, and in the hallowed tent  
With him will celebrate a genial banquet.

OLD MAN. My honoured mistress (for with you I grieve),  
We are betrayed by your perfidious lord,  
Wronged by premeditated fraud, and cast  
Forth from Erectheus' house : I speak not this

Through hatred to your husband, but because  
I love you more than him, who wedding you  
When to the city he a stranger came,  
Your palace too and whole inheritance  
With you receiving, on some other dame  
Appears to have begotten sons by stealth :  
How 'twas by stealth I'll prove ; when he perceived  
That you were barren, he was not content  
To share the self-same fate, but on a slave,  
Whom he embraced in secrecy, begot  
And to some Delphic matron gave this son,  
That in a foreign realm he might be nurtured :  
He, to the temple of Apollo sent,  
Is here trained up in secret. But the sire,  
Soon as he knew the stripling had attained  
The years of manhood, hath on you prevailed  
Hither to come, because you had no child.  
The god indeed hath spoken truth ; not so  
Xuthus, who from his infancy hath reared  
The boy, and forged these tales ; that, if detected,  
His crimes might be imputed to the god :  
But coming hither, and by length of time  
Hoping to screen the fraud, he now resolves  
He will transfer the sceptre to this stripling,  
For whom at length he forges the new name  
Of Ion, to denote that he went forth  
And met him. Ah, how do I ever hate  
Those wicked men who plot unrighteous deeds,  
And then adorn them with delusive art !  
Rather would I possess a virtuous friend  
Of mean abilities, than one more wise  
And profligate. Of all disastrous fates  
Yours is the worst, who to your house admit  
Its future lord, whose mother is unknown,  
A youth selected from th' ignoble crowd,  
The base-born issue of some female slave.  
For this had only been a single ill  
Had he persuaded you, since you are childless,  
T' adopt, and in your palace lodged the son

Of some illustrious dame : but if to you  
 This scheme had been disgustful, from the kindred  
 Of Æolus his sire should he have sought  
 Another consort. Hence is it incumbent  
 On you to execute some great revenge  
 Worthy of woman : with the lifted sword,  
 Or by some stratagem or deadly poison,  
 Your husband and his offspring to dispatch  
 Ere you by them are murdered : you will lose  
 Your life if you delay, for when two foes  
 Meet in one house some mischief must befall,  
 Or this or that. I therefore will with you  
 Partake the danger, and with you conspire  
 To slay that stripling, entering the abode  
 Where for the sumptuous banquet he is making  
 Th' accustomed preparation. While I view  
 The sun, and e'en in death, will I repay  
 The bounty of those lords who nurtured me.  
 For there is one thing only which confers  
 Disgrace on slaves—the name ; in all beside  
 No virtuous slave to freeborn spirits yields.

CHOR. I too, O my dear mistress, am resolved  
 To be the steadfast partner of your fate,  
 And die with glory, or with glory live.

CRE. How, O my tortured soul, shall I be silent?  
 But rather how these hidden loves disclose?  
 Shall I shake off all shame? for what retards  
 My farther progress? To how dire a struggle  
 Doth my beleaguered virtue lie exposed?  
 Hath not my lord betrayed me? For of house  
 And children too am I deprived. All hopes  
 Are vanished now of which I fondly sought  
 T' avail myself, but could not, by concealing  
 The loss of my virginity, those throes  
 Concealing which I ever must bewail.  
 But by the starry throne of Jove, the goddess  
 Who haunts my rocks, and by the sacred banks  
 Of Triton's lake, whose waters never fail,  
*I my disgrace no longer will suppress,*  
*For, having cleansed my soul from that pollution*

I shall have shaken off a load of cares.  
 My eyes drop tears, and sorrow rends my soul—  
 Assailed with treachery both by men and gods,  
 Whom I will prove to have been false, devoid  
 Of gratitude to those they loved. O thou,  
 Whose skilful hand attunes the sevenfold chords  
 Of the melodious lyre, from lifeless shells  
 Eliciting the Muses' sweetest strains,  
 Son of Latona, I this day will publish  
 A tale to thee disgraceful : for thou cam'st,  
 Thou cam'st resplendent with thy golden hair,  
 As I the crocus gathered, in my robe  
 Each vivid flower assembling to compose  
 Garlands of fragrance : 'thou my snowy wrist  
 Didst seize and drag me to the cave, with shrieks  
 While to my mother for her aid I cried :  
 'Twas impudently done, thou lustful god,  
 To gain the favour of the Cyprian queen.  
 In evil hour, to thee I bore a son,  
 Whom, fearful of my mother's wrath, I cast  
 Into that cave, where thou with wretched me  
 Didst join thyself in luckless love. Alas !  
 Now is our miserable son no more,  
 On him have vultures feasted. But meanwhile  
 Thy festive Pæans to the sounding harp  
 Dost thou repeat. O offspring of Latona,  
 To thee I speak, who from thy golden tripod  
 Dost in this centre of the world dispense  
 Thy oracles. My voice shall reach thy ears,  
 O thou false paramour, who, from my lord  
 Though thou no favours ever didst receive,  
 A son into his mansions hast conveyed :  
 Meanwhile the offspring whom to thee I bore  
 Hath died unnoticed, by the vultures torn ;  
 Lost are the bandages in which his mother  
 Had wrapped him. Thee thy Delos doth abhor,  
 The branches of whose laurel rise to meet  
 The palm, and form that shade, where thee her son  
 With arms divine Latona first embraced.

CHOR. Ah me ! How inexhaustible a source

Of woes is opened, such as must draw tears  
From every eye.

OLD MAN. O daughter, on your face,  
Still with unsated rapture do I gaze,  
My reason have I lost : for, while I strive  
From my o'erburdened spirit to discharge  
The waves of woe, fresh torrents at the poop  
Rush in and overwhelm me, since the words  
Which you have uttered, from your present ills  
Digressing to the melancholy track  
Of other sufferings. What is it you say ?  
What charge would you allege against Apollo ?  
What son is this whom you assert you bore ?  
And in what quarter of your native city  
To beasts did you expose him for a prey ?  
To me repeat the tale.

CRE. Thou aged man,  
Thy presence makes me blush : yet will I speak.

OLD MAN. Full well do I know how to sympathize  
With my afflicted friends.

CRE. Then hear my tale.  
Thou must remember, on the northern side  
Of the Cecropian rock, the cave called Macra.

OLD MAN. I know it ; on that spot Pan's temple stands,  
And near it blaze his altars.

CRE. 'Twas the scene  
Of my unhappy conflict.

OLD MAN. Say, what conflict ?  
Your history makes me weep.

CRE The amorous god  
Apollo held me in a forced embrace.

OLD MAN. Was this, my daughter, then, what I perceived ?

CRE. I know not ; but will openly declare  
The truth, if thy conjectures light on it.

OLD MAN. When you in silence wailed some hidden woe ?

CRE. Those evils happened then which I to thee  
Without disguise reveal.

OLD MAN. But by what means  
Your union with Apollo did you hide ?

CRE. I bore a son—with patience hear me speak,  
O venerable man.

OLD MAN. Where? Who performed  
Th' obstetric part? Did you alone endure  
The grievous throes of childbirth?

CRE. All alone  
Within that cave where I my honour lost.

OLD MAN. But where's the boy, that in this childless state  
Thou mayst remain no longer?

CRE. He is dead,  
Old man; to beasts was he exposed.

OLD MAN. How! Dead!  
Was Phœbus then so base as not to aid you?

CRE. No aid he gave: but in the dreary house  
Of Pluto is our hapless offspring nurtured.

OLD MAN. But who exposed him? Sure it was not you?

CRE. I in the midnight gloom around him wrapped  
A mantle.

OLD MAN. To th' exposure of your son  
Was no man privy?

CRE. I had no accomplice  
But secrecy with evil fortune leagued.

OLD MAN. And how could you endure to leave the child  
Within that cavern?

CRE. How? These lips did utter  
Full many piteous words.

OLD MAN. The cruelty  
Which you here showed was dreadful: but the god  
Than you was still more cruel.

CRE. Had you seen  
The child stretch forth his suppliant hands to me—

OLD MAN. Sought he the fostering breast, or to recline  
In your maternal arms?

CRE. Hence torn he suffered  
From me foul wrong.

OLD MAN. But whence could such a thought  
Enter your soul as to expose your son?

CRE. Because I hoped Apollo, who begot,  
*Would save him.*

OLD MAN. Ah, what storms have overwhelmed  
The fortunes of your house !

CRE. Why, covering up  
Thy head, thus weep'st thou, O thou aged man ?

OLD MAN. Because I see you and your father wretched.

CRE. Such is the doom of frail mortality :  
Nought rests in the same state.

OLD MAN. But let us dwell  
No more, O daughter, on the piteous theme.

CRE. What must I do ? The wretched can devise  
No wholesome counsel.

OLD MAN. On the god who wronged you  
First wreak your vengeance.

CRE. How can I a mortal  
O'ercome the potent deities ?

OLD MAN. Set fire  
To Phœbus' awful temple.

CRE. Fear restrains me,  
And I endure sufficient woes already.

OLD MAN. Dare then to do what's feasible, to kill  
Your husband.

CRE. I revere the nuptial bed,  
For when I first espoused the noble Xuthus,  
My lord was virtuous.

OLD MAN. Slay at least this boy,  
Who is produced your interest to oppose.

CRE. Ah, by what means ? How greatly should I wish  
This done, if it were possible.

OLD MAN. By arming  
With swords your followers.

CRE. I will go : but where  
Shall this be executed ?

OLD MAN. In the tent  
Where with a banquet he regales his friends.

CRE. This were a public outrage, and my band  
Of followers is but weak.

OLD MAN. Alas ! your courage  
Deserts you : forge yourself some better scheme.

CRE. I too have schemes both subtle and effective.

OLD MAN. In both will I assist you.

CRE.

Hear me then :

Full well thou know'st the history of that war

Waged by earth's brood.

OLD MAN.

Against the gods I know

The giants fought on the Phlægrean plain.

CRE. There earth produced the Gorgon, dreadful monster.

OLD MAN. To aid her sons in battle, and contend

With the immortal powers.

CRE.

E'en so, and Pallas,

Daughter of Jove, the virgin goddess, slew

This prodigy.

OLD MAN. But by what horrid form

Was it distinguished ?

CRE.

Hissing serpents twined

Around its chest.

OLD MAN.

Is this the tale I heard

In days of yore ?

CRE.

That Pallas wears its hide

To guard her bosom.

OLD MAN.

Which they call the Ægis,

The garment of Minerva.

CRE.

It obtained

This name, amidst the combat of the gods

When she advanced.

OLD MAN.

But how can this, O daughter,

Destroy your foes ?

CRE.

Old man, art thou acquainted

With Ericthonius, or an utter stranger

To his whole history ?

OLD MAN.

Him whom earth brought forth,

The founder of your race.

CRE.

Minerva gave

To him when newly born—

OLD MAN.

Gave what ? You speak

With hesitation.

CRE.

Of the Gorgon's blood

Two drops.

OLD MAN. On mortals what effect have these ?



CRE. The one produces death, the other heals  
Each malady.

OLD MAN. In what were they contained?  
Did Pallas to the body of the child  
Affix them?

CRE. To his golden bandages :  
He gave them to my sire.

OLD MAN. But when he died,  
Did they devolve to you?

CRE. To me they came,  
And them e'en now around my wrists I wear.

OLD MAN. But of what wondrous qualities, O say,  
Consists this twofold present of the goddess?

CRE. That blood which issued from the monster's vein.

OLD MAN. What is the use of this? and with what virtues  
Is it endued?

CRE. Diseases it repels,  
And nourishes man's life.

OLD MAN. But what effect  
Arises from the second drop you speak of?

CRE. Inevitable death : for 'tis the venom  
Of serpents which around the Gorgon twine.

OLD MAN. These drops together mingled, do you bring,  
Or separate?

CRE. Separate. For with evil good  
Ought not to be confounded.

OLD MAN. You possess,  
My dearest daughter, all that you can need.

CRE. By this the boy must die : but to dispatch him  
Shall be your office.

OLD MAN. Where and by what means  
Can I dispatch him? It is yours to speak,  
But mine to execute.

CRE. When at my house  
In Athens he arrives.

OLD MAN. In this you speak  
Unwisely; for you treat with scorn my counsels.

CRE. What mean'st thou? Hast thou formed the same sus-  
Which have just entered my misgiving soul? [picians

OLD MAN. Although this boy you slay not, you will seem  
To have contrived his death.

CRE. 'Tis well observed :  
For every tongue asserts that stepdames envy  
Their husband's children.

OLD MAN. Kill him, therefore, here ;  
You then will be enabled to deny  
That by your means he perished.

CRE. Ere it comes,  
I that blest hour anticipate.

OLD MAN. Your husband  
Will you deceive e'en in that very point  
In which he strives t' o'erreach you.

CRE. Know'st thou then  
How to proceed ? This ancient golden vase  
Wrought by Minerva, at my hand receiving,  
Go where my lord in secret offers up  
His victims ; when the banquet is concluded,  
And they prepare to pour forth to the gods  
The rich libation, by thy robe concealed  
Infuse into the goblet of the youth  
Its venomous contents ; for him alone,  
Who in my house hereafter hopes to reign,  
A separate draught, but not designed for all.  
Should he once swallow this, he ne'er will reach  
The famed Athenian gates, but here remain  
A breathless corse.

OLD MAN. This mansion, for the purpose  
Of public hospitality designed,  
Now enter : I meanwhile will execute  
The business I'm employed in. Aged feet  
Grow young again by action, though past time  
Can ne'er be measured back. Attend, my queen !  
Bear me to him I hate, aid me to slay  
And drag him forth from the polluted temple !  
For in their prosperous fortunes men are bound  
To be religious ; but no law obstructs  
His progress who resolves to smite his foes.

[*Exeunt* CREUSA and OLD MAN.]

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I. 1.

O Trivia, Ceres' daughter, who presid'st  
O'er the nocturnal passenger,  
And him by day who travels; if thou guid'st  
Th' envenomed cup, it shall not err  
Before it reach the destined lip  
Of him to whom my venerable queen  
Sends the Gorgon's blood to sip,  
Who treacherously intruding would debase  
Her ancestors' imperial race.  
No alien's brood in Athens shall be seen;  
The city where Erectheus filled the throne  
Shall still be ruled by his posterity alone.

## I. 2.

But if in vain to slay the foe she tries,  
Should fortune too desert my queen,  
And hope which now promotes the bold emprise;  
The biting falchion's edge I ween,  
Or, twined around her neck, the noose,  
Will finish these accumulated woes.  
Then the flitting spirit, loose  
From earthly gyves, in other forms shall live.  
For she will never tamely give  
Consent, that he, to foreign realms who owes  
His birth, shall seize the palace of her sires:  
Hence from her vivid eyes thick flash indignant fires.

## II. I.

Shame for that injured god I feel  
To whom the muse awakes her varied strain,  
Intruding with officious zeal,  
Around Callichore's famed spring,  
On the moon's twentieth eve, should he profane  
The kindled torches, and his tribute bring,  
A sleepless votary, mingling with his train,

When in the dance the starry sky  
 Of Jove, with the resplendent moon, unites,  
 And fifty maids, the progeny  
 Of Nereus, sport midst ocean's rapid tide,  
 Or where exhaustless rivers glide,  
 To Proserpine and Ceres' mystic rites  
 Yielding due homage: from the Delphic fane,  
 Yet there this vagrant hopes to reign,  
 And satiate his rapacious soul's desire  
 With wealth, which others' toils acquire.

## II. 2.

Ye bards who crowd each hostile page  
 With tales of wives beguiled by lawless love,  
 And war with feeble woman wage,  
 View with impartial eye our deeds,  
 And listen for a moment while I prove  
 How greatly female chastity exceeds  
 Man, whom unbridled passions prompt to rove.  
 Oft have rude songs profaned our name,  
 Now let the muse man's haughty sex assail,  
 And publish deeds replete with shame.  
 For he who from Jove's sons derives his birth  
 Is void of gratitude and worth,  
 Nought could the throne his consort gave avail  
 To make the nuptial bed his scene of joy:  
 He hath obtained this spurious boy,  
 By the seducing wiles of Venus led  
 To some ignoble damsel's bed.

## SERVANT, CHORUS.

SER. Where, O ye noble matrons, shall I find  
 My queen, Erectheus' daughter? For in quest  
 Of her through the whole city have I ranged,  
 But cannot meet with her.

CHOR. O thou who tend'st  
 On the same lords with me, what fresh event  
 Hath happened—wherefore mov'st thou with such speed?  
 And what important tidings dost thou bring?

SER. We are pursued : the rulers of this land  
Search after her, resolved that she shall die,  
Thrown headlong from the rock.

CHOR. Ah me ! what sayst thou ?  
Could we not then conceal our scheme of slaying  
The boy ?

SER. We are detected, and her danger  
Is now most imminent.

CHOR. But by what means  
Were these our hidden stratagems brought forth  
To public view ?

SER. The god hath found injustice  
Too weak to cope with justice, nor allows  
His shrine to be polluted.

CHOR. I entreat thee  
Say how this happened : for when we have heard  
Whether our doom be death, we shall die gladly,  
Or, if we live, with pleasure view the sun.

SER. When from the god's oracular abode  
With his new son Creusa's husband went  
To hold a feast, and for th' immortal powers  
Prepared oblations, Xuthus sought the hill  
Whence Bacchus' flames burst forth, that he might sprinkle  
Parnassus' cloven summit with the blood  
Of slaughtered victims, celebrating thus  
The blest discovery of his long-lost son,  
Whom thus the sire accosted : " Here remain,  
And bid the builders labour to erect  
Such tent as shall enclose an ample space  
On every side : but when I to those gods  
Who bless the natal hour have sacrificed,  
If I stay long, before thy friends who here  
Are present, place the genial feast." Then taking  
The heifers, he departed. But the youth,  
Attentive to his pious task, on columns  
Erected the light roof, to which no walls  
Lent their support ; he guarded it with care,  
Both from the flaming sun's meridian rays,  
And from the western aspect ; then the sides

An acre each in length did he extend,  
With equal angles ; in the central space  
Was there an area, each of the four sides  
Its length extended to six hundred feet,  
A perfect square, which skilful artists say  
Was calculated well to entertain  
All Delphi at the feast ; the sacred tapestry  
Then taking from the treasures of the god,  
He covered o'er the whole—a wondrous sight  
To all beholders. First he o'er the roof  
Threw robes, which Hercules, the son of Jove,  
To Phœbus at his temple brought, the spoils  
Of vanquished Amazons, a votive gift,  
On which these pictures by the loom were wrought :  
Heaven, in its vast circumference all the stars  
Assembling ; there his coursers, too, the sun  
Impetuous drove, till ceased his waning flame,  
And with him drew in his resplendent train  
Vesper's clear light ; but, clad in sable garb,  
Night hastened onward, with her chariot drawn  
By steeds unyoked ; the stars accompanied  
Their goddess ; through mid-air the Pleiades,  
And, with his falchion, armed Orion moved ;  
But placed on high, around the Northern Pole,  
The Bear, in an averted posture, turned ;  
Then full-orbed Cynthia, who the months divides,  
Darted her splendour from the realms above ;  
Next came the Hyades, a sign well known  
To sailors, and Aurora's dawning light,  
The stars dispelling. But the sides he covered  
With yet more tapestry : the Barbaric fleet  
To that of Greece opposed was there displayed :  
Followed a monstrous brood, half horse, half man,  
The Thracian monarch's furious steeds subdued,  
And lion of Nemæa ; at the gate  
Close to his daughters Cecrops rolled along  
On scaly folds ; this was a votive gift  
From some Athenian citizen unknown.  
He in the centre of the festive board

Placed golden cups. An aged herald went  
On tiptoe, and each citizen of Delphi  
Invited to attend the sumptuous feast.  
They, crowned with garlands, when the tent was filled,  
Indulged their genius. After the delight  
Of the repast was o'er, an aged man,  
Into the midst advancing, took his stand,  
And from the guests by his officious zeal  
Provoked abundant laughter : from huge urns  
He poured the water forth to lave their hands,  
And scattered all around from blazing myrrh  
A rich perfume, over the golden cups  
Presiding, and assuming to himself  
That office. But at length, when the shrill pipe  
Uttered its notes harmonious, and the wine  
Again went round, the jovial veteran cried :  
" These smaller cups remove, and in their stead  
Large goblets bring, that all may cheer their souls  
More expeditiously." Then toiled the servants  
Beneath the silver vessels which they bore,  
And golden beakers by the sculptor wrought :  
But he, selecting one of choicest mould,  
As if he only meant to show respect  
To his young lord, presented it filled high  
Up to the brim, infusing midst the wine  
A deadly poison, which 'tis said his queen  
Gave him, that the new offspring of her lord  
Might perish, but without its being known  
To any man what caused the stripling's death.  
While he, whom Xuthus has declared his son,  
Surrounded by his comrades, in his hands  
Held the libation, some reproachful word  
Was uttered by a servant, which the youth,  
Who had received his nurture in the fane  
And midst experienced prophets, thought an omen  
Most unpropitious, and another goblet  
Commanded to be filled : but, on the ground,  
As a libation to the Delphic god,  
Poured forth the first, and bade his comrades follow

Th' example which he gave. A general silence  
Succeeded : we the holy goblets filled  
With water and with Biblian wine. While thus  
We were employed, there flew into the tent  
A flock of doves (for they beneath the roof  
Of Phœbus dwell secure) ; but of the wine  
When they had tasted, after they had dipped  
Their beaks, which thirsted for the luscious draught,  
And the rich beverage down their feathered throats  
Quaffed eagerly, innoxious did it prove  
To all beside, but she, who on the spot  
Had settled where the new-discovered stripling  
Poured his libation down, no sooner tasted  
The liquor, than she shook her wings, cried out  
With a shrill plaintive voice, and, groaning, uttered  
Notes unintelligible. Every guest  
The struggles of the dove amazed ; she died  
Torn with convulsions, and her purple feet  
Now loosed their hold. But at the social board,  
He whom the oracle declared the son  
Of Xuthus, rent his garments, bared his breast,  
And cried, " What miscreant strove to slay me. Speak,  
Old man, for this officious zeal was thine,  
And from thy hand the goblet I received."  
Then with impetuous grasp his aged arm  
He caught, and questioned him, that in the fact  
Of bearing venomed drugs he might detect him.  
Hence was the truth laid open : through constraint,  
At length did he reluctantly declare  
Creusa's guilt, and how her heart contrived  
The scheme of minist'ring th' envenomed draught.  
Forth from the banquet with his comrades rushed  
The youth, whom Phœbus' oracles pronounced  
To be the son of Xuthus. Standing up  
Among the Pythian nobles, thus he spoke :  
" O sacred land, the daughter of Erectheus,  
A foreign dame, would take away my life  
By poison." Delphi's rulers have decreed  
My queen shall be thrown headlong from the rock,



Nor hath one single voice, but the consent  
 Of all, adjudged her death, because she strove,  
 E'en in the temple, to have slain the priest.  
 Pursued by the whole city, hither bend  
 Her inauspicious steps. She through a wish  
 For children to Apollo came : but now  
 She perishes with all her hoped-for race. [*Exit SERVANT.*]

CHOR. No means are left for wretched me  
 The ruthless hand of death to 'scape ;  
 For all too plainly see,  
 Mixt with the purple juices of the grape,  
 The baleful drops of viper's blood :  
 'Tis manifest what victims were designed  
 To cross the dreary Stygian flood.  
 My life is doomed to close in woe,  
 At me huge rocky fragments will they throw.  
 How, O my royal mistress, shall I find  
 Pinions to speed my rapid flight ?  
 How shall I penetrate earth's inmost womb,  
 And in the realms of night  
 Avoid this miserable doom ;  
 Avoid the stones which vengeance hurls around,  
 When at our heads she aims the wound ?  
 Shall I the fleetest steed ascend,  
 Or the tall prow which cleaves the billowy main ?  
 No heart can hide so foul a stain,  
 Unless some god his sheltering aid extend.  
 How sorely, O my wretched queen,  
 Will thy tortured spirit grieve !  
 And shall not we, who have been seen  
 Striving to work another's bane,  
 The woes we would inflict, receive,  
 As justice doth ordain ?

CREUSA, CHORUS.

CRE. My faithful followers, they pursue my flight,  
 Resolved to slay me ; by the public vote  
 Of all the Pythian citizens condemned,  
 I shall be yielded up.

CHOR. We are no strangers  
To thy calamities; mayst thou escape,  
Favoured by fortune!

CRE. Whither shall I fly?  
These feet were hardly swift enough t' outstrip,  
Impending death: but from my foes escaped,  
By stealth I come.

CHOR. What shelter canst thou need  
More than these altars furnish?

CRE. How can they  
Avail me?

CHOR. 'Tis unlawful to destroy  
The suppliant.

CRE. But the law hath sentenced me  
To perish.

CHOR. Hadst thou by their hands been caught.

CRE. But the relentless ministers of vengeance,  
Armed with drawn swords, haste hither.

CHOR. Take thy seat  
Close to the altar, for if there thou die,  
Thy blood will on thy murderers fix a stain  
That ne'er can be effaced. But we with patience  
Are bound to suffer what the Fates inflict.

ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

ION. Cephisus, O thou awful sire, who bear'st  
The semblance of a bull, what viper's this  
Thou hast begotten, or what dragon darting  
Flames most consuming from her murderous eyes!  
She with unbounded boldness is endued,  
And pestilent as those envenomed drops  
Of Gorgon's blood with which she sought to kill me.  
Seize her! Parnassus' rocks shall tear away  
The graceful ringlets of her streaming hair,  
When headlong from its summit she is thrown.  
Me hath propitious fortune here detained,  
Else to th' Athenian city had I gone,  
And fallen into a cruel step-dame's snares,  
But while I yet among my friends remain,

Thy heart have I explored, how great a pest  
 And foe thou art to me, for at thy doors  
 Hadst thou received me, thou to Pluto's realm  
 Wouldst instantly have hurled me down. Behold  
 The sorceress, what a complicated scene  
 Of treachery hath she framed, yet trembles not  
 The altar of Apollo to approach,  
 As if Heaven's vengeance could not reach her crimes.  
 But neither shall this altar nor the temple  
 Of Phœbus save thy life : for the compassion  
 Thou wouldst excite is rather due to me  
 And to my mother ; for ~~although~~ in person,  
 She be not here, yet is that much-loved name  
 Ne'er absent from my thoughts.

CRE. To spare my life  
 In my own name I warn you, and in that  
 Of the vindictive god before whose altar  
 We stand.

ION. But what hast thou to do with Phœbus ?

CRE. Myself I to the Delphic god devote.

ION. Though thou his priest by poison wouldst have slain.

CRE. Phœbus in you had at that time no right,  
 Because you were your father's.

ION. I was once  
 Apollo's, and still call myself his son.

CRE. To him indeed you formerly belonged,  
 But now am I his votary, and no claim  
 Have you to such a title.

ION. Thy behaviour  
 Is impious, mine was pious erst.

CRE. I sought  
 To take away the life of you, a foe  
 To me and to my house.

ION. Did I with arms  
 Invade thy country ?

CRE. Yes, and you have fired  
 The mansions of Erectheus.

ION. With what brands,  
 What flames ?

CRE. You in my palace would have dwelt,  
Seizing it 'gainst my will.

ION. My sire bestowing  
On me the realm his valour had obtained.

CRE. But by what claim rule Æolus' race  
Over Minerva's city?

ION. With his sword  
He rescued it, and not with empty words.

CRE. He was but an ally, nor was that land  
His proper residence.

ION. Through the mere dread  
Of what might happen, wouldst thou then have slain me?

CRE. Lest I should perish if your life were spared.

ION. With envy art thou stung, because my sire  
Discovered me, while thou remain'st yet childless.

CRE. Would you invade the childless matron's house?

ION. But have not I some title to a share  
Of my sire's wealth?

CRE. A shield and spear are all  
Your father had, and all that you can claim.

ION. Leave Phœbus' altar and this hallowed seat.

CRE. Where'er she dwell, to your own mother give  
Such admonitions.

ION. Shalt thou 'scape unpunished  
For thy attempt to slay me?

CRE. If you mean  
To take away my life, let it be here  
Within this temple.

ION. What delight to thee  
Can it afford, amid the votive wreaths  
Of Phœbus to expire?

CRE. I shall afflict  
One by whom I have greatly been afflicted.

ION. Oh! 'tis most wondrous how, for man t' observe,  
The deity such laws as are not good  
Or prudent hath enacted. For th' unjust  
Before their altars ought to find no seat,  
But thence to be expelled; for 'tis not fit  
The statues of the gods by impious hands

Should be profaned ; but every virtuous man  
 Who is oppressed ought to find shelter there.  
 Yet is it most unseemly for the just  
 And the unjust, when here they meet together,  
 T' experience the same treatment from the gods.

PYTHIAN PRIESTESS, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

PYTHIAN PRIESTESS. Refrain thy rage, my son ; for I the  
 priestess

Of Phœbus, who the tripod's ancient rites  
 Maintain, selected from the Delphic maids,  
 Leave his oracular abode and pass  
 This consecrated threshold.

ION. Hail, dear mother.

Although you bore me not.

PYTHIAN PR. Yet call me such.

That name is not ungrateful.

ION. Have you heard

The stratagems she formed to murder me?

PYTHIAN PR. I heard them ; and thou also hast trans-  
 gressed  
 Through cruelty.

ION. How? Can it be unjust,  
 Those who would slay me, to reward with death?

PYTHIAN PR. Wives with inveterate hatred ever view  
 Their husbands' sons sprung from another bed.

ION. And we who have by them been greatly wronged,  
 Abhor those step-dames.

PYTHIAN PR. Banish from thy soul  
 This rancour, now the temple thou art leaving,  
 And on thy journey to thy native land.

ION. How then would you advise me to proceed?

PYTHIAN PR. Go unpolluted to th' Athenian realm  
 With prosperous omens.

ION. Sure the man who slays  
 His foes is unpolluted.

PYTHIAN PR. Act not thus :  
 But with attentive ear receive my counsels.

ION. O speak : for your benevolence to me  
Will dictate all you utter.

PYTHIAN PR. Dost thou see  
The chest beneath my arm?

ION. An ancient chest,  
With garlands decked, I see.

PYTHIAN PR. In this, thee erst  
A new-born infant, I received.

ION. What mean you?  
A fresh discovery opens.

PYTHIAN PR. I have kept  
These tokens secret ; but display them now.

ION. How could you hide them such a length of time  
As since you took me up?

PYTHIAN PR. The god required  
Thy service in his temple.

ION. Doth he now  
No longer need it? Who this doubt will solve?

PYTHIAN PR. By pointing out thy sire, he from these  
realms  
Dismisses thee.

ION. But is it by command,  
Or from what motive, that this chest you keep?

PYTHIAN PR. Apollo's self inspired me with the thought—

ION. Of doing what? O speak! Conclude your tale.

PYTHIAN PR. With care preserving to the present time  
What I had found.

ION. But how can this to me  
Cause either gain or damage?

PYTHIAN PR. Know'st thou not,  
That round thee close these fillets were entwined?

ION. What you produce may aid me in th' attempt  
To find my mother.

PYTHIAN PR. With the god's consent,  
Which he did erst withhold.

ION. O day, that bring'st  
Blest visions to delight these wondering eyes!

PYTHIAN. PR. Observe these hints, and diligently search  
For her who bore thee : traversing all Asia,

And Europe's furthest limits, thou shalt know  
The truth of what I speak. Thee, O my son,  
I nurtured, through a reverence for the god,  
And here surrender to thy hands the pledges  
Which 'twas his will I should receive and keep,  
Though not commanded: but I cannot tell  
What motive swayed him. For, that I possessed  
These tokens, was by no man known, or where  
They were concealed. Farewell, my love for thee  
Is equal to a mother's. With these questions  
Thou shouldst commence thy search for her who bore thee;  
First, whether she was any nymph of Delphi,  
Who thee, the burden of her womb, exposed  
Here in this fane; but be thy next inquiry,  
If any Grecian dame. For thou deriv'st  
All the advantages thou hast, from me,  
And from Apollo, who in this event  
Hath been concerned.

ION. Alas! what plenteous tears  
Steal from these eyes, while shuddering I revolve  
How she who bore me, having erst indulged  
A secret passion, did by stealth expose,  
Nor at her breast sustain me: but unknown  
I in the temple of Apollo led  
A servile life. The god indeed was kind,  
But fortune harsh: for at the very time  
When in maternal arms I should have sported,  
And tasted somewhat of the joys of life,  
I of my dearest mother's fostering care  
Was cruelly deprived. She from whose womb  
I sprung is wretched too; she hath endured  
The self-same pangs with me, and lost the bliss  
She might have hoped for from the son she bore.  
But now this ancient coffer will I take  
And carry for a present to the god;  
O may I hence discover nought to blast  
My wishes! For if haply she who bore me  
Should prove some slave, it were a greater evil  
To find my mother than to let her rest

In silence. I this votive gift, O Phœbus,  
 Lodge in thy fane. But what presumptuous deed !  
 Oppose I the benignant god who saved  
 These tokens to assist me in discovering  
 My mother ? I am bound to ope the lid,  
 And act with courage : for what fate ordains  
 I ne'er can supersede. Why were ye hidden  
 From me, O sacred wreaths and bandages  
 In which I was preserved ? This orbéd chest,  
 Behold, how by some counsel of the god  
 It hath been freed from the effects of age ;  
 Still is its wicker substance undecayed,  
 Although the time which intervened was long  
 For such a store to last.

CRE. Ah me ! What vision  
 Most unexpected do I see ?

CHOR. Thou oft  
 Didst heretofore know when thou shouldst be silent.

CRE. My situation now no more admits  
 Of silence : cease these counsels ; for I view  
 The chest in which I, O my son, exposed you,  
 While yet a tender infant, in the cave  
 Of Cecrops midst th' encircling rocks of Maera.  
 I therefore from this altar will depart,  
 Though death should be the consequence.

ION. O seize her ;  
 For she, with frenzy smitten by the god,  
 Leaps from the hallowed altar : bind her arms.

CRE. The execution of your bloody purpose  
 Suspend not : for this chest, and you, and all  
 The hidden relics it contains of yours,  
 My son, will I hold fast.

ION. Are not these arts  
 Most dreadful ? With what specious words e'en now  
 She claims me for a pledge !

CRE. Not thus : but you,  
 Whom they hold dear, are by your friends discovered.

ION. Am I a friend of thine, and yet in secret  
 Wouldst thou have murdered me ?



CRE. Yea, and my son ;  
A name to both thy parents ever dear.

ION. Cease to contrive these fraudulent stratagems ;  
For I will clearly prove that thou art guilty.

CRE. Ah, would to Heaven that I could reach the mark  
At which I aim my shaft !

ION. Is that chest empty,  
Or filled with hidden stores ?

CRE. Here are the garments  
In which I erst exposed you.

ION. Canst thou tell  
What name they bear before thine eyes behold them ?

CRE. If I aright describe them not, to die  
Will I be nothing loth.

ION. Speak ; for thy boldness  
Is somewhat wonderful.

CRE. Observe the robe  
Which erst I wove, when yet a maid.

ION. What sort  
Of garment is it ? for the virgins' loom  
Produces various woofs.

CRE. Not yet complete ;  
The sketch bespeaks a learner.

ION. In what form,  
That here thou mayst not take me unawares ?

CRE. The Gorgon fills the centre of that vest.

ION. O Jove, what fate pursues me !

CRE. And the margin  
With serpents is encompassed like the Ægis.

ION. Lo ! this is the same garment. We have made  
Such a complete discovery as resembles  
The oracles of Heaven.

CRE. O woof which erst  
My virgin-shuttle wrought.

ION. Canst thou produce  
Aught else, or in this evidence alone  
Art thou successful ?

CRE. In a style antique  
Dragons with golden che Minerva's gift,

Who bids us rear our children 'mong such forms,  
In imitation of our ancestor  
Great Ericthonius.

ION.                               What is their effect,  
Or what can be their use? To me explain  
These golden ornaments.

CRE.                               Them, O my son,  
Around his neck the new-born child should wear.

ION. Here are the dragons: but I wish to know  
What's the third sign.

CRE.                               Then round your brow I placed  
A garland of that olive which first grew  
On Pallas' rock; this, if it still be here,  
Hath not yet lost the verdure of its leaves,  
But flourishes unwithered like the tree  
From which 'twas taken.

ION.                               O my dearest mother,  
With what delight do I behold thy face!  
And on those cheeks with what delight imprint  
The kiss of filial rapture!

CRE.                               O my son,  
Who in a mother's partial eyes outshine  
The splendour of Hyperion (for the god  
Will pardon me), I clasp you in these arms  
Found unexpectedly, you whom I thought  
To have been plunged beneath the silent grave,  
And dwelt with Proserpine.

ION.                               But while thou fling'st,  
O my dear mother, thy fond arms around me,  
To thee I seem like one who hath been dead  
And is restored to life.

CRE.                               Thou wide expanse  
Of radiant ether, in what grateful tone  
Shall I express myself? By clamorous shouts?  
Whence hath such unexpected pleasure reached me?  
To whom am I indebted for this joy?

ION. Sooner could I have looked for aught, O mother,  
Happening to me, than the discovery made  
In this auspicious hour, that I am thine.

CRE. With fear I tremble yet lest thou shouldst lose—

ION. The son who meets thy fond embrace?

CRE. Such hopes  
I from my soul had banished. Whence, O woman,  
Didst thou with fostering arms receive my child?  
By whom to Phœbus' temple was he borne?

ION. 'Twas the god's doing. But may prosperous fortune  
Be ours through the remainder of our lives,  
Which have been wretched hitherto.

CRE. My son,  
Not without tears were you brought forth; your mother  
'Midst bitter lamentations from her arms  
Cast you to earth: but now, while to your cheeks  
I press my lips, again I breathe, I taste  
The most ecstatic pleasures.

ION. What thou sayst  
May to us both with justice be applied.

CRE. No longer am I left without an heir,  
No longer childless; my paternal house  
Acquires new strength, and the Athenian realm  
Hath yet its native monarchs. E'en Erechtheus  
Grows young again, nor shall our earth-born race  
Be covered with the shades of night, but view  
The sun's resplendent beams.

ION. But, O my mother,  
Since my sire too is present, let him share  
The transports I to thee have given.

CRE. What words  
Are these which you have uttered, O my son?

ION. Who proves to be the author of my birth.

CRE. Why speak of this? For from another sire  
You spring, and not from Xuthus.

ION. Me, alas!  
In thy unwedded state, a spurious child,  
Thou then didst bear.

CRE. Nor yet had Hymen waved  
For me his torch, or led the choral dance,  
When, O my dearest son, for you I felt  
*A mother's throes.*

ION. From what ignoble race  
Am I descended?

CRE. Witness she who slew  
The Gorgon.

ION. Ha! What mean'st thou by these words?

CRE. Who on my rocks, whence with spontaneous shoot  
The fragrant olive springs, my native hills,  
Fixes her seat.

ION. To me thou speak'st so darkly,  
That what thou mean'st I cannot comprehend.

CRE. Beneath the rock where her harmonious lays  
The nightingale attunes, I by Apollo—

ION. Why dost thou name Apollo?

CRE. Was embraced  
In secrecy—

ION. Speak on; for fair renown,  
And prosperous fortune, will to me accrue  
From the event which thou relat'st.

CRE. To Phœbus.  
While in its orbit the tenth moon revolved,  
I bore a son, whom I concealed.

ION. Most grateful  
Are these strange tidings, if thou utter truth.

CRE. The fillets which I erst, while yet a maid,  
Wove with my shuttle I around you twined;  
But you ne'er clung to this maternal breast,  
Nor did these hands for you the laver hold,  
But in a desert cavern were you thrown  
To perish, torn by the remorseless beaks  
Of hungry vultures.

ION. What a horrid deed  
Was this, in thee, O mother!

CRE. By my fears  
Held fast in bondage, O my son, your life  
I would have cast away—would then, though loth,  
Have murdered you.

ION. Thou too didst scarce escape  
From being slain by my unholy rage.

CRE. Such were my wretched fortunes then, and such





ION. What motive, then, had he for yielding up  
His offspring to another sire, pretending  
That I am Xuthus' son?

CRE. The god asserts not  
That Xuthus was the author of your birth,  
But you, his offspring, doth on him bestow.  
For to a friend a friend may give his son  
T' inherit his possessions.

ION. O my mother,  
An anxious doubt, whether the god speak truth,  
Or utter a fallacious oracle,  
Is cause sufficient to disturb my soul.

CRE. Hear then, my son, what thoughts to me occur :  
Your benefactor Phœbus places you  
In an illustrious house ; but were you called  
The offspring of the god, you would receive  
For your inheritance nor wide domains  
Nor aught of rank paternal. For from him  
With whom my luckless union I concealed,  
And secretly attempted to have slain you,  
How could you look for aught? But he, promoting  
Your interest, to another sire consigns you.

ION. I cannot rashly credit tales like these.  
But I will go into the fane, and ask  
Apollo, whether from a mortal sire  
I spring, or whether I am Phœbus' son.  
Ha ! Who is that, who on the pinnacles  
Of this high dome ascending, like the sun,  
Displays her front celestial ? Let us fly,  
My mother, lest perchance we view the gods  
When we are not permitted to behold them.

MINERVA, ION, CREUSA, CHORUS.

MIN. O stay, for 'tis from me you fly, who bear  
To you no hate, but in th' Athenian realm  
And here am equally your friend : I, Pallas,  
From whom your native land derives its name,  
Am hither come with swift career despatched  
By Phœbus, in your presence who himself

Deems it not meet t' appear, lest his past conduct  
In foul reproach involve him : but the god  
Sends me t' inform you that Creusa bore,  
And Phœbus was the father who begot you.  
But you, the god, as he sees fit, bestows,  
Not upon him who is your real sire,  
But hath contrived this plot that you may gain  
The heritage of an illustrious house.  
For when the holy oracle pronounced  
This riddle, fearing, by a mother's wiles,  
Lest you should bleed, or with vindictive hand  
That mother slay, he by a stratagem  
Hath extricated both. The royal seer  
Meant to have kept this secret, till at Athens  
He had proclaimed that you derive your birth  
From Phœbus and Creusa. But this matter  
That I may finish now, and the contents  
Of those important oracles reveal,  
Which to explore ye by your harnessed steeds  
Were hither drawn, attend. Creusa, take  
Thy son, to the Cecropian land repair,  
And place him on the throne ; for, from the race  
Of great Erectheus sprung, he is entitled  
To rule my favoured realm, and shall be famed  
Through Greece : for his four sons, sprung from one root,  
Shall, on their country, and its tribes who dwell  
Upon my sacred rock, their name confer ;  
Geleon the first ; then Hoples, Argades,  
And, from the shield I bear, a chief called Ægis  
Shall rule th' Ægichori. But their descendants,  
Born at a period by the Fates assigned,  
Amid the Cyclades shall dwell, in towns  
Encircled by the billowy deep, and havens  
Which to my realm will add new strength : the shores  
Of either continent shall they possess,  
Asia and Europe, but, from Ion, styled  
Ionians, they with glory shall be crowned,  
But from thee too and Xuthus shall descend  
*A noble race ; Dorus, the mighty founder*

Of the famed Doric realm ; in the domain  
 Of ancient Pelops, shall your second son,  
 Achæus, be the monarch of the coast  
 Bordering on Rhium's steep ascent—with pride  
 That nation shall adopt their leader's name.  
 In all things hath Apollo acted right ;  
 First, without pain he caused thee to bring forth,  
 Lest to thy friends thy shame should be revealed :  
 But after thou hadst borne this son, and swathed  
 Those fillets round him, he bade Hermes bring  
 The infant to this fane, and nurtured him,  
 Nor suffered him to die. Now, therefore, keep  
 Strict silence, nor declare that he is thine,  
 That Xuthus may exult in the idea  
 Of being father to the youth, while thou,  
 O woman, shalt enjoy the real bliss.  
 Farewell, for from this pause in your afflictions  
 I to you both announce a happier fate.

ION. O Pallas, daughter of imperial Jove,  
 Thy words I disbelieve not : for from Phœbus  
 And this illustrious dame am I convinced  
 That I derive my birth, which from the first  
 Was not improbable.

CRE. To what I speak  
 Now give attention : I commend Apollo,  
 Though erst I blamed him ; for he now restores  
 To me the son he formerly neglected.  
 Now are these portals pleasing to my sight,  
 And this oracular abode of Phœbus,  
 Which I so lately loathed. I now these rings  
 Seize with exulting hands, and at the threshold  
 Utter my grateful orisons.

MIN. The praises  
 Which thou bestow'st on Phœbus, I applaud,  
 And this thy sudden change : for though the aid  
 The gods afford be tardy, it at length  
 Proves most effectual.

CRE. Let us, O my son,  
 Repair to our own Athens.



MIN. Thither go,  
And I will follow.

CRE. Deign t' accompany  
Our steps, and to our city prove a friend.

MIN. Upon the throne of thy progenitors,  
There take thy seat.

ION. To me will such possession  
Be honourable.

CHOR. O Phœbus, son of Jove  
And of Latona, hail ! Whene'er his house  
Is shaken by calamity, the man  
Who pays due reverence to the gods hath cause  
To trust in their protection : for at length  
The virtuous shall obtain their due reward,  
Nor shall the wicked prosper in the land.

# M E D E A.

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

NURSE OF MEDEA.	JASON.
ATTENDANT ON THE CHILDREN.	ÆGEUS.
MEDEA.	MESSENGER.
CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.	THE TWO SONS OF JASON AND
CREON.	MEDEA.

SCENE—BEFORE THE PALACE OF CREON AT CORINTH.

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### NURSE.

AH ! would to heaven the Argo ne'er had urged  
Its rapid voyage to the Colchian strand  
'Twixt the Cyanean rocks, nor had the pine  
Been ~~fell~~ in Pelion's forests, nor the hands  
Of those illustrious chiefs, who that famed bark  
Ascended to obtain, the golden fleece  
For royal Pelias, plied the stubborn oar ;  
So to Iolchos' turrets had my Queen  
Medea never sailed, her soul with love  
For Jason smitten, nor, as since her arts  
Prevailed on Pelias' daughters to destroy  
Their father, in this realm of Corinth dwelt  
An exile with her husband and her sons ;  
Thus to the citizens whose land received her  
Had she grown pleasing, and in all his schemes  
Assisted Jason : to the wedded pair,  
Hence bliss supreme arises, when the bond  
Of concord joins them : now their souls are filled  
With ruthless hate, and all affection's lost :  
For false to his own sons, and her I serve,

With a new consort of imperial birth  
Sleeps the perfidious Jason, to the daughter  
Of Creon wedded, lord of these domains.  
The wretched scorned Medea oft exclaims,  
"O by those oaths, by that right hand thou gav'st  
The pledge of faith!" She then invokes the gods  
To witness what requital she hath found  
From Jason. On a couch she lies, no food  
Receiving, her whole frame subdued by grief;  
And since she marked the treachery of her lord  
Melts into tears incessant, from the ground  
Her eyes she never raises, never turns  
Her face aside, but steadfast as a rock,  
Or as the ocean's rising billows, hears  
The counsels of her friends, save when she weeps  
In silent anguish, with her snowy neck  
Averted, for her sire, her native land,  
And home, which she forsaking hither came  
With him who scorns her now. She from her woes  
Too late hath learnt how enviable the lot  
Of those who leave not their paternal roof.  
She even hates her children, nor with joy  
Beholds them : much I dread lest she contrive  
Some enterprise unheard of, for her soul  
Is vehement, nor will she tamely brook  
Injurious treatment ; well, full well I know  
Her temper, which alarms me, lest she steal  
Into their chamber, where the genial couch  
Is spread, and with the sword their vitals pierce,  
Or to the slaughter of the bridegroom add  
That of the monarch, and in some mischance,  
Yet more severe than death, herself involve :  
For dreadful is her wrath, nor will the object  
Of her aversion gain an easy triumph.  
But lo, returning from the race, her sons  
Draw near : they think not of their mother's woes,  
For youthful souls are strangers to affliction.

ATTENDANT, *with the SONS of JASON and MEDEA*, NURSE.

ATT. O thou, who for a length of time hast dwelt  
Beneath the roofs of that illustrious dame  
I serve, why stand'st thou at these gates alone  
Repeating to thyself a doleful tale :  
Or wherefore by Medea from her presence  
Art thou dismissed ?

NUR. Old man, O you who tend  
On Jason's sons, to faithful servants aught  
Of evil fortune that befalls their lords  
Is a calamity : but such a pitch  
Of grief am I arrived at, that I felt  
An impulse which constrained me to come forth  
From these abodes, and to the conscious earth  
And heaven proclaim the lost Medea's fate.

ATT. Cease not the plaints of that unhappy dame ?

NUR. Your ignorance I envy : for her woes  
Are but beginning, nor have yet attained  
Their mid career.

ATT. O how devoid of reason,  
If we with terms thus harsh may brand our lords,  
Of ills more recent nothing yet she knows.

NUR. Old man, what mean you ? Scruple not to speak.

ATT. Nought. What I have already said repents me.

NUR. I by that beard conjure you not to hide  
The secret from your faithful fellow-servant.  
For I the strictest silence will observe  
If it be needful.

ATT. Some one I o'erheard  
(Appearing not to listen, as I came  
Where aged men sit near Pirene's fount  
And hurl their dice) say that from Corinth's land  
Creon, the lord of these domains, will banish  
The children with their mother ; but I know not  
Whether th' intelligence be true, and wish  
It may prove otherwise.

NUR. Will Jason brook

Such an injurious treatment of his sons,  
Although he be at variance with their mother ?

ATT. By new connections are all former ties  
Dissolved, and he no longer is a friend  
To this neglected race.

NUR. We shall be plunged  
In utter ruin, if to our old woes,  
Yet unexhausted, any fresh we add.

ATT. Be silent, and suppress the dismal tale,  
For 'tis unfit our royal mistress know.

NUR. Hear, O ye children, how your father's soul  
Is turned against you : still, that he may perish  
I do not pray, because he is my lord ;  
Yet treacherous to his friends hath he been found.

ATT. Who is not treacherous ? Hast thou lived so long  
Without discerning how self-love prevails  
O'er social ? Some by glory, some by gain,  
Are prompted. Then what wonder, for the sake  
Of a new consort, if the father slight  
These children ?

NUR. Go, all will be well, go in.  
Keep them as far as possible away,  
Nor suffer them to come into the presence  
Of their afflicted mother ; for her eyes  
Have I just seen with wild distraction fired,  
As if some horrid purpose against them  
She meant to execute ; her wrath I know  
Will not be pacified, till on some victim  
It like a thunderbolt from Heaven descends ;  
May she assail her foes alone, nor aim  
The stroke at those she ought to hold most dear.

MED. [*within.*] Ah me ! how grievous are my woes ! What  
Can I devise to end this hated life ? [means

NUR. 'Tis as I said : strong agitations seize  
Your mother's heart, her choler's raised. Dear children,  
Beneath these roofs hie instantly, nor come  
Into her sight, accost her not, beware  
Of these ferocious manners and the rage  
*Which boils in that ungovernable spirit.*

Go with the utmost speed, for I perceive  
Too clearly that her plaints, which in thick clouds  
Arise at first, will kindle ere 'tis long  
With tenfold violence. What deeds of horror  
From that high-soaring, that remorseless soul,  
May we expect, when goaded by despair !

[*Exeunt ATTENDANT and SONS.*]

MED. [*within.*] I have endured, alas ! I have endured—  
Wretch that I am !—such agonies as call  
For loudest plaints. Ye execrable sons  
Of a devoted mother, perish ye  
With your false sire, and perish his whole house !

NUR. Why should the sons—ah, wretched me !—partake  
Their father's guilt ? Why hat'st thou them ? Ah me !  
How greatly, O ye children, do I fear  
Lest mischief should befall you : for the souls  
Of kings are prone to cruelty, so seldom  
Subdued, and over others wont to rule,  
That it is difficult for such to change  
Their angry purpose. Happier I esteem  
The lot of those who still are wont to live  
Among their equals. May I thus grow old,  
If not in splendour, yet with safety blest !  
For first of all, renown attends the name  
Of mediocrity, and to mankind  
Such station is more useful : but not long  
Can the extremes of grandeur ever last ;  
And heavier are the curses which it brings  
When Fortune visits us in all her wrath.

CHORUS, NURSE.

CHOR. The voice of Colchos' hapless dame I heard—  
A clamorous voice, nor yet is she appeased.  
Speak, O thou aged matron, for her cries  
I from the innermost apartment heard ;  
Nor can I triumph in the woes with which  
This house is visited ; for to my soul  
Dear are its interests.

NUR.

This whole house is plunged

In ruin, and its interests are no more.  
 While Corinth's palace to our lord affords  
 A residence, within her chamber pines  
 My mistress, and the counsels of her friends  
 Afford no comfort to her tortured soul.

MED. [*within.*] O that a flaming thunderbolt from Heaven  
 Would pierce this brain ! for what can longer life  
 To me avail ? Fain would I seek repose  
 In death, and cast away this hated being.

CHOR. Heard'st thou, all-righteous Jove, thou fostering earth,  
 And thou, O radiant lamp of day, what plaints,  
 What clamorous plaints this miserable wife  
 Hath uttered ? Through insatiable desire,  
 Ah why would you precipitate your death ?  
 O most unwise ! These imprecations spare.  
 What if your lord's affections are engaged  
 By a new bride, reproach him not, for Jove  
 Will be the dread avenger of your wrongs ;  
 Nor melt away with unavailing grief,  
 Weeping for the lost partner of your bed.

MED. [*within.*] Great Themis and Diana, awful queen,  
 Do ye behold the insults I endure,  
 Though by each oath most holy I have bound  
 That execrable husband. May I see  
 Him and his bride, torn limb from limb, bestrew  
 The palace ; me have they presumed to wrong,  
 Although I ne'er provoked them. O my sire,  
 And thou my native land, whence I with shame  
 Departed when my brother I had slain.

NUR. Heard ye not all she said, with a loud voice  
 Invoking Themis, who fulfils the vow,  
 And Jove, to whom the tribes of men look up  
 As guardian of their oaths. Medea's rage  
 Can by no trivial vengeance be appeased.

CHOR. Could we but draw her hither, and prevail  
 On her to hear the counsels we suggest,  
 Then haply might she check that bitter wrath,  
 That vehemence of temper ; for my zeal  
*Shall not be spared to aid my friends.* But go,

And say, "O hasten, ere to those within  
Thou do some mischief, for these sorrows rush  
With an impetuous tempest on thy soul."

NUR. This will I do; though there is cause to fear  
That on my mistress I shall ne'er prevail:  
Yet I my labour gladly will bestow  
Though such a look she on her servants casts  
As the ferocious lioness who guards  
Her tender young, when any one draws near  
To speak to her. Thou wouldst not judge amiss,  
In charging folly and a total want  
Of wisdom on the men of ancient days,  
Who for their festivals invented hymns,  
And to the banquet and the genial board  
Confined those accents which o'er human life  
Diffuse ecstatic pleasures: but no artist  
Hath yet discovered, by the tuneful song,  
And varied modulations of the lyre,  
How we those piercing sorrows may assuage  
Whence slaughters and such horrid mischiefs spring  
As many a prosperous mansion have o'erthrown.  
Could music interpose her healing aid  
In these inveterate maladies, such gift  
Had been the first of blessings to mankind:  
But, 'midst choice viands and the circling bowl,  
Why should those minstrels strain their useless throat?  
To cheer the drooping heart, convivial joys  
Are in themselves sufficient. [Exit NURSE.]

CHOR. Mingled groans  
And lamentations burst upon mine ear:  
She in the bitterness of soul exclaims  
Against her impious husband, who betrayed  
His plighted faith. By grievous wrongs oppress,  
She the vindictive gods invokes, and Themis,  
Jove's daughter, guardian of the sacred oath,  
Who o'er the waves to Greece benignly steered  
Their bark adventurous, launched in midnight gloom,  
Through ocean's gates which never can be closed!



## MEDEA, CHORUS.

214 MED. From my apartment, ye Corinthian dames,  
Lest ye my conduct censure, I come forth :  
For I have known full many who obtained  
Fame and high rank ; some to the public gaze  
Stood ever forth, while others, in a sphere  
More distant, chose their merits to display :  
Nor yet a few, who, studious of repose,  
Have with malignant obloquy been called  
Devoid of spirit : for no human eyes  
Can form a just discernment ; at one glance,  
Before the inmost secrets of the heart  
Are clearly known, a bitter hate 'gainst him  
Who never wronged us they too oft inspire.  
But 'tis a stranger's duty to adopt  
The manners of the land in which he dwells ;  
Nor can I praise that native, led astray  
By mere perverseness and o'erweening folly,  
Who bitter enmity incurs from those  
Of his own city. But, alas ! my friends,  
This unforeseen calamity hath withered  
The vigour of my soul. I am undone,  
Bereft of every joy that life can yield,  
And therefore wish to die. For as to him,  
My husband, whom it did import me most  
To have a thorough knowledge of, he proves  
The worst of men. But sure among all those  
Who have with breath and reason been endued,  
We women are the most unhappy race.  
First, with abundant gold are we constrained  
To buy a husband, and in him receive  
A haughty master. Still doth there remain  
One mischief than this mischief yet more grievous,  
The hazard whether we procure a mate  
Worthless or virtuous : for divorces bring  
Reproach to woman, nor must she renounce  
The man she wedded ; as for her who comes  
Where usages and edicts, which at home

She learnt not, are established, she the gift  
Of divination needs to teach her how  
A husband must be chosen : if aright  
These duties we perform, and he the yoke  
Of wedlock with complacency sustains,  
Ours is a happy life ; but if we fail  
In this great object, better 'twere to die.  
For, when afflicted by domestic ills,  
A man goes forth, his choler to appease,  
And to some friend or comrade can reveal  
What he endures ; but we to him alone  
For succour must look up. They still contend  
That we, at home remaining, lead a life  
Exempt from danger, while they launch the spear :  
False are these judgments ; rather would I thrice,  
Armed with a target, in th' embattled field  
Maintain my stand, than suffer once the throes  
Of childbirth. But this language suits not you :  
This is your native city, the abode  
Of your loved parents, every comfort life  
Can furnish is at hand, and with your friends  
You here converse : but I, forlorn, and left  
Without a home, am by that husband scorned  
Who carried me from a Barbarian realm.  
Nor mother, brother, or relation now  
Have I, to whom I 'midst these storms of woe,  
Like an auspicious haven, can repair.  
Thus far I therefore crave ye will espouse  
My interests, as if haply any means  
Or any stratagem can be devised  
For me with justice to avenge these wrongs  
On my perfidious husband, on the king  
Who to that husband's arms his daughter gave,  
And the new-wedded princess ; to observe  
Strict silence. For although at other times  
A woman, filled with terror, is unfit  
For battle, or to face the lifted sword,  
She when her soul by marriage wrongs is fired,  
Thirsts with a rage unparalleled for blood.

CHOR. The silence you request I will observe,  
 For justly on your lord may you inflict  
 Severest vengeance : still I wonder not  
 If your disastrous fortunes you bewail :  
 But Creon I behold who wields the sceptre  
 Of these domains ; the monarch hither comes  
 His fresh resolves in person to declare.

CREON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

CRE. Thee, O Medea, who, beneath those looks  
 Stern and forbidding, harbour'st 'gainst thy lord  
 Resentment, I command to leave these realms  
 An exile ; for companions of thy flight  
 Take both thy children with thee, nor delay.  
 Myself pronounce this edict : I my home  
 Will not revisit, from the utmost bounds  
 Of this domain, till I have cast thee forth.

MED. Ah, wretched me ! I utterly am ruined :  
 For in the swift pursuit, my ruthless foes,  
 Each cable loosing, have unfurled their sails,  
 Nor can I land on any friendly shore  
 To save myself, yet am resolved to speak,  
 Though punishment impend. What cause, O Creon  
 Have you for banishing me ?

CRE. Thee I dread  
 (No longer is it needful to disguise  
 My thoughts) lest 'gainst my daughter thou contrive  
 Some evil such as medicine cannot reach.  
 Full many incidents conspire to raise  
 This apprehension : with a deep-laid craft  
 Art thou endued, expert in the device  
 Of mischiefs numberless, thou also griev'st  
 Since thou art severed from thy husband's bed.  
 I am informed, too, thou hast menaced vengeance  
 'Gainst me, because my daughter I bestowed  
 In marriage, and the bridegroom, and his bride.  
 Against these threats I therefore ought to guard  
 Before they take effect ; and better far  
 Is it for me, O woman, to incur

Thy hatred now, than, soothed by thy mild words,  
Hereafter my forbearance to bewail.

MED. Not now, alas ! for the first time, but oft  
To me, O Creon, hath opinion proved  
Most baleful, and the source of grievous woes.  
Nor ever ought the man, who is possess  
Of a sound judgment, to train up his children  
To be too wise : for they who live exempt  
From war and all its toils, the odious name  
Among their fellow-citizens acquire  
Of abject sluggards. If to the unwise  
You some fresh doctrine broach, you are esteemed  
Not sapient, but a trifler : when to those  
Who in their own conceit possess each branch  
Of knowledge, you in state affairs obtain  
Superior fame, to them you grow obnoxious.  
I also feel the grievance I lament ;  
Some envy my attainments, others think  
My temper uncomplying, though my wisdom  
Is not transcendent. But from me it seems  
You apprehend some violence ; dismiss  
Those fears ; my situation now is such,  
O Creon, that to monarchs I can give  
No umbrage : and in what respect have you  
Treated me with injustice ? You bestowed  
Your daughter where your inclination led.  
Though I abhor my husband, I suppose  
That you have acted wisely, nor repine  
At your prosperity. Conclude the match ;  
Be happy : but allow me in this land  
Yet to reside ; for I my wrongs will bear  
In silence, and to my superiors yield.

CRE. Soft is the sound of thy persuasive words,  
But in my soul I feel the strongest dread  
Lest thou devise some mischief, and now less  
Than ever can I trust thee ; for 'gainst those  
Of hasty tempers with more ease we guard,  
Or men or women, than the silent foe  
Who acts with prudence. Therefore be thou gone



With speed, no answer make : it is decreed,  
Nor hast thou art sufficient to avert  
Thy doom of banishment ; for well aware  
Am I thou hat'st me.

MED. Spare me, by those knees  
And your new-wedded daughter, I implore.

CRE. Lavish of words, thou never shalt persuade me.

MED. Will you then drive me hence, and to my prayers  
No reverence yield ?

CRE. I do not love thee more  
Than those of my own house.

MED. With what regret  
Do I remember thee, my native land !

CRE. Except my children, I hold nought so dear.

MED. To mortals what a dreadful scourge is love !

CRE. As fortune dictates, love becomes, I ween,  
Either a curse or blessing.

MED. Righteous Jove,  
Let not the author of my woes escape thee.

CRE. Away, vain woman, free me from my cares.

MED. No lack of cares have I.

CRE. Thou from this spot  
Shalt by my servants' hands ere long be torn.

MED. Not thus, O Creon, I your mercy crave.

CRE. To trouble me, it seems, thou art resolved.

MED. I will depart, nor urge this fond request.

CRE. Why dost thou struggle then, nor from our realm  
Withdraw thyself ?

MED. Allow me this one day  
Here to remain, till my maturer thoughts  
Instruct me to what region I can fly,  
Where for my sons find shelter, since their sire  
Attends not to the welfare of his race.  
Take pity on them, for you also know  
What 'tis to be a parent, and must feel  
Parental love : as for myself, I heed not  
The being doomed to exile, but lament  
Their hapless fortunes.

CRE. No tyrar

Within this bosom dwells, but pity oft  
 Hath warped my better judgment, and though now  
 My error I perceive, shall thy request  
 Be granted. Yet of this must I forewarn thee :  
 If when to-morrow with his orient beams.  
 Phœbus the world revisits, he shall view  
 Thee and thy children still within the bounds  
 Of these domains, thou certainly shalt die—  
 Th' irrevocable sentence is pronounced.  
 But if thou needs must tarry, tarry here  
 This single day, for in so short a space  
 Thou canst not execute the ills I dread. [*Exit CREON.*]

CHOR. Alas ! thou wretched woman, overpowered  
 By thy afflictions, whither wilt thou turn ?  
 What hospitable board, what mansion, find.  
 Or country to protect thee from these ills ?  
 Into what storms of misery have the gods  
 Caused thee to rush !

MED. On every side distress  
 Assails me : who can contradict this truth ?  
 Yet think not that my sorrows thus shall end.  
 By yon new-wedded pair must be sustained  
 Dire conflicts, and no light or trivial woes  
 By them who in affinity are joined  
 With this devoted house. Can ye suppose  
 That I would e'er have soothed him, had no gain  
 Or stratagem induced me ? Else to him  
 Never would I have spoken, nor once raised  
 My suppliant hands. But now is he so lost  
 In folly, that, when all my schemes with ease  
 He might have baffled, if he from this land  
 Had cast me forth, he grants me to remain  
 For this one day, and ere the setting sun  
 Three of my foes will I destroy—the sire,  
 The daughter, and my husband : various means  
 Have I of slaying them, and, O my friends,  
 Am at a loss to fix on which I first  
 Shall undertake, or to consume with flames  
 The bridal mansion, or a dagger plunge

Into their bosoms, entering unperceived  
The chamber where they sleep: But there remains  
One danger to obstruct my path: if caught  
Stealing into the palace, and intent  
On such emprise, in death shall I afford  
A subject of derision to my foes.  
This obvious method were the best, in which  
I am most skilled, to take their lives away  
By sorceries. Be it so; suppose them dead.  
What city will receive me for its guest,  
What hospitable foreigner afford  
A shelter in his land, or to his hearth  
Admit, or snatch me from impending fate?  
Alas! I have no friend. I will delay  
A little longer therefore; if perchance,  
To screen me from destruction, I can find  
Some fortress, then I in this deed of blood  
With artifice and silence will engage;  
But, if by woes inextricable urged  
Too closely, snatching up the dagger them  
Am I resolved to slay, although myself  
Must perish too; for courage unappalled  
This bosom animates. By that dread queen,  
By her whom first of all th' immortal powers  
I worship, and to aid my bold emprise  
Have chosen, the thrice awful Hecaté,  
Who in my innermost apartment dwells,  
Not one of them shall triumph in the pangs  
With which they wound my heart; for I will render  
This spousal rite to them a plenteous source  
Of bitterness and mourning—they shall rue  
Their union, rue my exile from this land.  
But now come on, nor, O Medea, spare  
Thy utmost science to devise and frame  
Deep stratagems, with swift career advance  
To deeds of horror. Such a strife demands  
Thy utmost courage. Hast thou any sense  
Of these indignities? Nor is it fit  
That thou, who spring'st from an illustrious sire,

And from that great progenitor the sun,  
Shouldst be derided by the impious brood  
Of Sisyphus, at Jason's nuptial feast  
Exposed to scorn : for thou hast ample skill  
To right thyself. Although by Nature formed  
Without a genius apt for virtuous deeds,  
We women are in mischiefs most expert.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Now upward to their source the rivers flow,  
And in a retrograde career  
Justice and all the baffled virtues go.  
The views of man are insincere,  
Nor to the gods though he appeal,  
And with an oath each promise seal,  
Can he be trusted. Yet doth veering fame  
Loudly assert the female claim,  
Causing our sex to be renowned,  
And our whole lives with glory crowned.  
No longer shall we mourn the wrongs  
Of slanderous and inhuman tongues.

I. 2.

Nor shall the Muses, as in ancient days,  
Make the deceit of womankind  
The constant theme of their malignant lays.  
For ne'er on our uncultured mind  
Hath Phœbus, god of verse, bestowed  
Genius to frame the lofty ode;  
Else had we waked the lyre, and in reply  
With descants on man's infamy  
Oft lengthened out th' opprobrious page.  
Yet may we from each distant age  
Collect such records as disgrace  
*Both us and man's imperious race.*



## II. 1.

By love distracted, from thy native strand,  
Thou 'twixt the ocean's clashing rocks didst sail  
But now, loathed inmate of a foreign land,  
Thy treacherous husband's loss art doomed to wail.  
O hapless matron, overwhelmed with woe,  
From this unpitying realm dishonoured must thou go.

## II. 2.

No longer sacred oaths their credit bear,  
And virtuous shame hath left the Grecian plain,  
She mounts to Heaven, and breathes a purer air.  
For thee doth no paternal house remain  
The sheltering haven from affliction's tides ;  
Over these hostile roofs a mightier queen presides.

## JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. Not now for the first time, but oft, full oft  
Have I observed that anger is a pest  
The most unruly. For when in this land,  
These mansions, you in peace might have abode,  
By patiently submitting to the will  
Of your superiors, you, for empty words,  
Are doomed to exile. Not that I regard  
Your calling Jason with incessant rage  
The worst of men ; but for those bitter taunts  
With which you have reviled a mighty king,  
Too mild a penalty may you esteem  
Such banishment. I still have soothed the wrath  
Of the offended monarch, still have wished  
That you might here continue ; but no bounds  
Your folly knows, nor can that tongue e'er cease  
To utter menaces against your lords ;  
Hence from these regions justly are you doomed  
To be cast forth. But with unwearied love  
Attentive to your interest am I come,  
Lest with your children you by cruel want  
Should be encompassed ; exile with it brings

Full many evils. Me, though you abhor,  
To you I harbour no unfriendly thought.

MED. Thou worst of villains (for this bitter charge  
Against thy abject cowardice my tongue  
May justly urge), com'st thou to me, O wretch,  
Who to the gods art odious, and to me  
And all the human race? It is no proof  
Of courage, or of steadfastness, to face  
Thy injured friends, but impudence, the worst  
Of all diseases. Yet hast thou done well  
In coming: I by uttering the reproaches  
Which thou deservest shall ease my burdened soul,  
And thou wilt grieve to hear them. With th' events  
Which happened first will I begin my charge.  
Each Grecian chief who in the Argo sailed  
Knows how from death I saved thee, when to yoke  
The raging bulls whose nostrils poured forth flames,  
And sow the baleful harvest, thou wert sent:  
Then having slain the dragon, who preserved  
With many a scaly fold the golden fleece,  
Nor ever closed in sleep his watchful eyes,  
I caused the morn with its auspicious beams  
To shine on thy deliverance; but, my sire  
And native land betraying, came with thee  
To Pelion, and Iolchos' gates: for love  
Prevailed o'er reason. Pelias next I slew—  
Most wretched death—by his own daughters' hands,  
And thus delivered thee from all thy fears.  
Yet though to me, O most ungrateful man,  
Thus much indebted, hast thou proved a traitor,  
And to the arms of this new consort fled,  
Although a rising progeny is thine.  
Hadst thou been childless, 'twere a venial fault  
In thee to court another for thy bride.  
But vanished is the faith which oaths erst bore,  
Nor can I judge whether thou think'st the gods  
Who ruled the world have lost their ancient power  
Or that fresh laws at present are in force  
Among mankind, because thou to thyself

Art conscious, thou thy plighted faith hast broken.  
 O my right hand, which thou didst oft embrace,  
 Oft to these knees a suppliant cling! How vainly  
 Did I my virgin purity yield up  
 To a perfidious husband, led astray  
 By flattering hopes! Yet I to thee will speak  
 As if thou wert a friend, and I expected  
 From thee some mighty favour to obtain:  
 Yet thou, if strictly questioned, must appear  
 More odious. Whither shall I turn me now?  
 To those deserted mansions of my father,  
 Which, with my country, I to thee betrayed,  
 And hither came; or to the wretched daughters  
 Of Pelias? They forsooth, whose sire I slew,  
 Beneath their roofs with kindness would receive me.  
 'Tis even thus: by those of my own house  
 Am I detested, and, to serve thy cause,  
 Those very friends, whom least of all I ought  
 To have unkindly treated, have I made  
 My enemies. But eager to repay  
 Such favours, 'mongst unnumbered Grecian dames,  
 On me superior bliss hast thou bestowed,  
 And I, unhappy woman, find in thee  
 A husband who deserves to be admired  
 For his fidelity. But from this realm  
 When I am exiled, and by every friend  
 Deserted, with my children left forlorn,  
 A glorious triumph, in thy bridal hour,  
 To thee will it afford, if those thy sons,  
 And I who saved thee, should like vagrants roam.  
 Wherefore, O Jove, didst thou instruct mankind  
 How to distinguish by undoubted marks  
 Counterfeit gold, yet in the front of vice  
 Impress no brand to show the tainted heart?

CHOR. How sharp their wrath, how hard to be appeased,  
 When friends with friends begin the cruel strife.

JAS. I ought not to be rash, it seems, in speech,  
 But like the skilful pilot, who, with sails  
 Scarce half unfurled, his bark more surely guides,

Escape, O woman, your ungoverned tongue.  
 Since you the benefits on me conferred  
 Exaggerate in so proud a strain, I deem  
 That I to Venus only, and no god  
 Or man beside, my prosperous voyage owe.  
 Although a wondrous subtlety of soul  
 To you belong, 'twere ~~an~~ invidious speech  
 For me to make should I relate how Love  
 By his inevitable shafts constrained you  
 To save my life. I will not therefore state  
 This argument too nicely, but allow,  
 As you did aid me, it was kindly done.  
 But by preserving me have you gained more  
 Than you bestowed, as I shall prove : and first,  
 Transplanted from barbaric shores, you dwell  
 In Grecian regions, and have here been taught  
 To act as justice and the laws ordain,  
~~Not~~ follow the caprice of brutal strength.  
 By all the Greeks your wisdom is perceived,  
 And you acquire renown ; but had you still  
 Inhabited that distant spot of earth,  
 You never had been named. I would not wish  
 For mansions heaped with gold, or to exceed  
 The sweetest notes of Orpheus' magic lyre,  
 Were those unfading wreaths which fame bestows  
 From me withheld by fortune. I thus far  
 On my own labours only have discoursed.  
 For you this odious strife of words began.  
 But in espousing Creon's royal daughter,  
 With which you have reproached me, I will prove  
 That I in acting thus am wise and chaste,  
 That I to you have been the best of friends,  
 And to our children. But make no reply.  
 Since hither from Iolchos' land I came,  
 Accompanied by many woes, and such  
 As could not be avoided, what device  
 More advantageous could an exile frame  
 Than wedding the king's daughter? Not through hate  
 To you, which you reproach me with, not smitten



With love for a new consort, or a wish  
 The number of my children to augment :  
 For those we have already might suffice,  
 And I complain not. But to me it seemed  
 Of great importance that we both might live  
 As suits our rank, nor suffer abject need,  
 Well knowing that each friend avoids the poor.  
 I also wished to educate our sons  
 In such a manner as befits my race  
 And with their noble brothers yet unborn,  
 Make them one family, that thus, my house  
 Cementing, I might prosper. In some measure  
 Is it your interest too that by my bride  
 I should have sons, and me it much imports,  
 By future children, to provide for those  
 Who are in being. Have I judged amiss ?  
 You would not censure me, unless your soul  
 Were by a rival stung. But your whole sex  
 Hath these ideas ; if in marriage blest  
 Ye deem nought wanting, but if some reverse  
 Of fortune e'er betide the nuptial couch,  
 All that was good and lovely ye abhor.  
 Far better were it for the human race  
 Had children been produced by other means,  
 No females e'er existing : hence might man  
 Exempt from every evil have remained.

CHOR. Thy words hast thou with specious art adorned,  
 Yet thou to me (it is against my will  
 That I such language hold), O Jason, seem'st  
 Not to have acted justly in betraying  
 Thy consort.

MED. From the many I dissent  
 In many points : for, in my judgment, he  
 Who tramples on the laws, but can express  
 His thoughts with plausibility, deserves  
 Severest punishment : for that injustice  
 On which he glories, with his artful tongue,  
 That he a fair appearance can bestow,  
 He dares to practise, nor is truly wise.

No longer then this specious language hold  
To me, who by one word can strike thee dumb.  
Hadst thou not acted with a base design,  
It was thy duty first to have prevailed  
On me to give consent, ere these espousals  
Thou hadst contracted, nor kept such design  
A secret from thy friends.

JAS. You would have served  
My cause most gloriously, had I disclosed  
To you my purposed nuptials, when the rage  
Of that proud heart still unsubdued remains.

MED. Thy real motive was not what thou sayst,  
But a Barbarian wife, in thy old age,  
Might have appeared to tarnish thy renown.

JAS. Be well assured, love urged me not to take  
The daughter of the monarch to my bed.  
But 'twas my wish to save you from distress,  
As I already have declared, and raise  
Some royal brothers to our former sons,  
Strengthening with fresh supports our shattered house.

MED. May that prosperity which brings remorse  
Be never mine, nor riches such as sting  
The soul with anguish.

JAS. Are you not aware  
You soon will change your mind and grow more wise?  
Forbear to spurn the blessings you possess,  
Nor droop beneath imaginary woes,  
When you are happy.

MED. Scoff at my distress,  
For thou hast an asylum to receive thee:  
But from this land am I constrained to roam  
A lonely exile.

JAS. This was your own choice:  
Accuse none else.

MED. What have I done—betrayed  
My plighted faith and sought a foreign bed?

JAS. You uttered impious curses 'gainst the king.

MED. I also in thy mansions am accursed.

JAS. With you I on these subjects will contend

No longer. But speak freely, what relief,  
 Or for the children or your exiled state,  
 You from my prosperous fortunes would receive:  
 For with a liberal hand am I inclined  
 My bounties to confer, and hence despatch  
 Such tokens, as to hospitable kindness  
 Will recommend you. Woman, to refuse  
 These offers were mere folly; from your soul  
 Banish resentment, and no trifling gain  
 Will hence ensue.

MED.                    No use I of thy friends  
 Will make, nor aught accept; thy presents spare,  
 For nothing which the wicked man can give  
 Proves beneficial.

JAS.                    I invoke the gods  
 To witness that I gladly would supply  
 You and your children with whate'er ye need:  
 But you these favours loathe, and with disdain  
 Repel your friends: hence an increase of woe  
 Shall be your lot.

MED.                    Be gone; for thou, with love  
 For thy young bride inflamed, too long remain'st  
 Without the palace. Wed her; though perhaps  
 (Yet with submission to the righteous gods,  
 This I announce) such marriage thou mayst rue.

[Exit JASON.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

Th' immoderate loves in their career,  
 Nor glory nor esteem attends,  
 But when the Cyprian queen descends  
 Benignant from her starry sphere,  
 No goddess can more justly claim  
 From man the grateful prayer.  
 Thy wrath, O Venus, still forbear,  
 Nor at my tender bosom aim  
 That venom'd arrow, ever wont t' inspire  
 Winged from thy golden bow, the pangs of keen desire.

I. 2.

May I in modesty delight,  
 Best present which the gods can give,  
 Nor torn by jarring passions live  
 A prey to wrath and cankered spite,  
 Still envious of a rival's charms,  
     Nor rouse the endless strife  
 While on my soul another wife  
 Impresses vehement alarms :  
 On us, dread queen, thy mildest influence shed,  
 Thou who discern'st each crime that stains the nuptial bed.

II. 1.

My native land, and dearest home !  
 May I ne'er know an exiled state,  
 Nor be it ever my sad fate  
 While from thy well-known bourn I roam,  
 My hopeless anguish to bemoan.  
     Rather let death, let death  
 Take at that hour my forfeit breath,  
 For surely never was there known  
 On earth a curse so great as to exceed,  
 From his loved country torn, the wretched exile's need.

II. 2.

These eyes attest thy piteous tale,  
 Which not from fame alone we know ;  
 But, O thou royal dame, thy woe  
 No generous city doth bewail,  
 Nor one among thy former friends.  
     Abhorred by Heaven and earth,  
 Perish the wretch devoid of worth,  
 Engrossed by mean and selfish ends,  
 Whose heart expands not those he loved to aid ;  
 Never may I lament attachments thus repaid.

ÆGEUS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ÆG. Medea, hail ! for no man can devise  
 Terms more auspicious to accost his friends.

MED. And you, O son of wise Pandion, hail



Illustrious Ægeus. But to these domains  
Whence came you?

ÆG. From Apollo's ancient shrine.

MED. But to that centre of the world, whence sounds  
Prophetic issue, why did you repair?

ÆG. To question by what means I may obtain  
A race of children.

MED. By the gods, inform me,  
Are you still doomed to drag a childless life?

ÆG. Such is the influence of some adverse demon.

MED. Have you a wife, or did you never try  
The nuptial yoke?

ÆG. With wedlock's sacred bonds  
I am not unacquainted.

MED. On the subject  
Of children, what did Phœbus say?

ÆG. His words  
Were such as mortals cannot comprehend.

MED. Am I allowed to know the god's reply?

ÆG. Thou surely art : such mystery to expound  
There needs the help of thy sagacious soul.

MED. Inform me what the oracle pronounced,  
If I may hear it.

ÆG. "The projecting foot,  
Thou, of the vessel must not dare to loose"—

MED. Till you do what, or to what region come?

ÆG. "Till thou return to thy paternal lares."

MED. But what are you in need of, that you steer  
Your bark to Corinth's shores?

ÆG. A king, whose name  
Is Pittheus, o'er Trœzene's realm presides.

MED. That most religious man, they say, is son  
Of Pelops.

ÆG. I with him would fain discuss  
The god's prophetic voice.

MED. For he is wise,  
And in this science long hath been expert.

ÆG. Dearest to me of those with whom I formed  
A league of friendship in the embattled field.

MED. But, O may you be happy, and obtain  
All that you wish for.

ÆG. Why those downcast eyes,  
That wasted form?

MED. O Ægeus, he I wedded  
To me hath proved of all mankind most base.

ÆG. What mean'st thou? In plain terms thy grief declare.

MED. Jason hath wronged me, though without a cause.

ÆG. Be more explicit, what injurious treatment  
Complain'st thou of?

MED. To me hath he preferred  
Another wife, the mistress of this house.

ÆG. Dared he to act so basely?

MED. Be assured  
That I, whom erst he loved, am now forsaken.

ÆG. What amorous passion triumphs o'er his soul?  
Or doth he loathe thy bed?

MED. 'Tis mighty love,  
That to his first attachment makes him false.

ÆG. Let him depart then, if he be so void  
Of honour as thou sayst.

MED. He sought to form  
Alliance with a monarch.

ÆG. Who bestows  
On him a royal bride? Conclude thy tale.

MED. Creon, the ruler of this land.

ÆG. Thy sorrows  
Are then excusable.

MED. I am undone,  
And banished hence.

ÆG. By whom? There's not a word  
Thou utter'st but unfolds fresh scenes of woe.

MED. Me from this realm to exile Creon drives.

ÆG. Doth Jason suffer this? I cannot praise  
Such conduct.

MED. Not in words: though he submits  
Without reluctance. But I by that beard,  
And by those knees, a wretched suppliant, crave  
Your pity; see me not cast forth forlorn,

But to your realms and to your social hearth  
 Receive me as a guest ; so may your love desire  
 For children be accomplished by the gods,  
 And happiness your close of life attend.  
 But how important a discovery Fortune  
 To you here makes you are not yet apprised :  
 For destitute of heirs will I permit you  
 No longer to remain, but through my aid  
 Shall you have sons, such potent drugs I know.

ÆG. Various inducements urge me to comply  
 With this request, O woman ; first an awe  
 For the immortal gods, and then the hope  
 That I the promised issue shall obtain.  
 On what my senses scarce can comprehend  
 I will rely. O that thy arts may prove  
 Effectual ! Thee, if haply thou arriv'st  
 In my domain, with hospitable rites  
 Shall it be my endeavour to receive,  
 As justice dictates : but to thee, thus much  
 It previously behoves me to announce :  
 I will not take thee with me from this realm ;  
 But to my house if of thyself thou come  
 Thou a secure asylum there shalt find,  
 Nor will I yield thee up to any foe.  
 But hence without my aid must thou depart,  
 For I, from those who in this neighbouring land  
 Of Corinth entertain me as their guest,  
 Wish to incur no censure.

MED. Your commands  
 Shall be obeyed : but would you plight your faith  
 That you this promise will to me perform,  
 A noble friend in you shall I have found.

ÆG. Believ'st thou not ? Whence rise these anxious  
 doubts ?

MED. In you I trust ; though Pelias' hostile race  
 And Creon's hate pursue me : but, if bound  
 By the firm sanction of a solemn oath,  
 You will not suffer them with brutal force  
 To drag me from your realm, but having entered

Into such compact, and by every god  
Sworn to protect me, still remain a friend,  
Nor hearken to their embassies. My fortune  
Is in its wane, but wealth to them belongs,  
And an imperial mansion.

ÆG. In these words  
Hast thou expressed great forethought : but if thus  
Thou art disposed to act, I my consent  
Will not refuse; for I shall be more safe  
If to thy foes some plausible excuse  
I can allege, and thee more firmly stablish.  
But say thou first what gods I shall invoke.

MED. Swear by the earth on which we tread, the sun  
My grandsire, and by all the race of gods.

ÆG. What action, or to do or to forbear?

MED. That from your land you never will expel,  
Nor while you live consent that any foe  
Shall tear me thence.

ÆG. By earth, the radiant sun,  
And every god I swear, I to the terms  
Thou hast proposed will steadfastly adhere.

MED. This may suffice. But what if you infringe  
Your oath, what punishment will you endure?

ÆG. Each curse that can befall the impious man.

MED. Depart, and prosper: all things now advance  
In their right track, and with the utmost speed  
I to your city will direct my course,  
When I have executed those designs  
I meditate, and compassed what I wish. [Exit ÆGEUS.

CHOR. But thee, O king, may Maia's wingéd son  
Lead to thy Athens; there mayst thou attain  
All that thy soul desires, for thou to me,  
O Ægeus, seem'st most generous.

MED. Awful Jove,  
Thou too, O Justice, who art ever joined  
With thundering Jove, and bright Hyperion's beams,  
You I invoke. Now, O my friends, o'er those  
I hate shall we prevail: 'tis the career  
Of victory that we tread, and I at length

Have hopes the strictest vengeance on my foes  
To execute : for where we most in need  
Of a protector stood, appeared this stranger,  
The haven of my counsels : we shall fix  
Our cables to this poop, soon as we reach  
That hallowed city where Minerva reigns.  
But now to you the whole of my designs  
Will I relate ; look not for such a tale  
As yields delight : some servant will I send  
An interview with Jason to request,  
And on his coming, in the softest words  
Address him ; say these matters are well pleasing  
To me, and in the strongest terms applaud  
That marriage with the daughter of the king,  
Which now the traitor celebrates ; then add,  
" 'Tis for our mutual good, 'tis rightly done."  
But the request which I intend to make  
Is that he here will let my children stay ;  
Not that I mean to leave them thus behind,  
Exposed to insults in a hostile realm  
From those I hate ; but that my arts may slay  
The royal maid : with presents in their hands,  
A vesture finely wrought and golden crown,  
Will I despatch them ; these they to the bride  
Shall bear, that she their exile may reverse :  
If these destructive ornaments she take  
And put them on, both she, and every one  
Who touches her, shall miserably perish—  
My presents with such drugs I will anoint.  
Far as to this relates, here ends my speech.  
But I with anguish think upon a deed  
Of more than common horror, which remains  
By me to be accomplished : for my sons  
Am I resolved to slay, them from this arm  
Shall no man rescue. When I thus have filled  
With dire confusion Jason's wretched house,  
I, from this land, yet reeking with the gore  
Of my dear sons, will fly, and having dared  
*A deed most impious.* For the scornful taunts

Of those we hate are not to be endured,  
 Happen what may. Can life be any gain  
 To me who have no country left, no home,  
 No place of refuge? Greatly did I err  
 When I forsook the mansions of my sire,  
 Persuaded by the flattery of that Greek  
 Whom I will punish, if just Heaven permit.  
 For he shall not again behold the children  
 I bore him while yet living. From his bride  
 Nor shall there issue any second race,  
 Since that vile woman by my baleful drugs  
 Vilely to perish have the Fates ordained.  
 None shall think lightly of me, as if weak,  
 Of courage void, or with a soul too tame,  
 But formed by Heaven in a far different mould,  
 The terror of my foes, and to my friends  
 Benignant : for most glorious are the lives  
 Of those who act with such determined zeal.

CHOR. Since thy design thus freely thou to us  
 Communicat'st, I, through a wish to serve  
 Thy interests, and a reverence for those laws  
 Which all mankind hold sacred, from thy purpose  
 Exhort thee to desist.

MED. This cannot be :  
 Yet I from you, because ye have not felt  
 Distress like mine, such language can excuse.

CHOR. Thy guiltless children wilt thou dare to slay?

MED. My husband hence more deeply shall I wound

CHOR. But thou wilt of all women be most wretched.

MED. No matter : all the counsels ye can give  
 Are now superfluous. But this instant go  
 And Jason hither bring ; for on your faith,  
 In all things I depend ; nor these resolves  
 Will you divulge if you your mistress love,  
 And feel a woman's interest in my wrongs.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.


Heroes of Erectheus' race,  
To the gods who owe your birth,  
And in a long succession trace  
Your sacred origin from earth,  
Who on wisdom's fruit regale,  
Purest breezes still inhale,  
And behold skies ever bright,  
Wandering through those haunted glades  
Where fame relates that the Pierian maids,  
Soothing the soul of man with chaste delight,  
Taught Harmony to breathe her first enchanting tale.

I. 2.

From Cephisus' amber tide,  
At the Cyprian queen's command,  
As sing the Muses, are supplied  
To refresh the thirsty land,  
Fragrant gales of temperate air ;  
While around her auburn hair,  
In a vivid chaplet twined  
Never-fading roses bloom  
And scent the champaign with their rich perfume,  
Love comes in unison with wisdom joined,  
Each virtue thrives if Beauty lend her fostering care.

II. 1.

For its holy streams renowned  
Can that city, can that state  
Where friendship's generous train are found  
Shelter thee from public hate,  
When, defiled with horrid guilt,  
Thou thy children's blood hast spilt ?  
Think on this atrocious deed  
Ere thy dagger aim the blow :  
Around thy knees our suppliant arms we throw ;  
O doom not, doom them not to bleed.



II. 2.

How can thy relentless heart  
 All humanity disclaim,  
 Thy lifted arm perform its part?  
 Lost to a sense of honest shame,  
 Canst thou take their lives away,  
 And these guiltless children slay?  
 Soon as thou thy sons shalt view,  
 How wilt thou the tear restrain,  
 Or with their blood thy ruthless hands distain,  
 When prostrate they for mercy sue?

JASON, MEDEA, CHORUS.

JAS. I at your call am come ; for though such hate  
 To me you bear, you shall not be denied  
 In this request ; but let me hear what else  
 You would solicit.

MED. Jason, I of thee  
 Crave pardon for the hasty words I spoke ;  
 Since just it were that thou shouldst bear my wrath,  
 When by such mutual proofs of love our union  
 Hath been cemented. For I reasoned thus,  
 And in these terms reproached myself : " O wretch,  
 Wretch that I am, what madness fires my breast ?  
 Or why 'gainst those who counsel me aright  
 Such fierce resentment harbour ? What just cause  
 Have I to hate the rulers of this land,  
 My husband too, who acts but for my good  
 In his espousals with the royal maid,  
 That to my sons he hence may add a race  
 Of noble brothers ? Shall not I appease  
 The tempest of my soul ? Why, when the gods  
 Confer their choicest blessings, should I grieve ?  
 Have not I helpless children ? Well I know  
 That we are banished from Thessalia's realm  
 And left without a friend." When I these thoughts  
 Maturely had revolved, I saw how great  
 My folly and how groundless was my wrath.



Now therefore I commend, now deem thee wise  
 In forming this connection for my sake :  
 But I was void of wisdom, or had borne  
 A part in these designs, the genial bed  
 Obsequiously attended, and with joy  
 Performed each menial office for the bride.  
 I will not speak in too reproachful terms  
 Of my own sex ; but we, weak women, are  
 What nature formed us ; therefore our defects  
 Thou must not imitate, nor yet return  
 Folly for folly. I submit and own  
 My judgment was erroneous, but at length  
 Have I formed better counsels. O my sons,  
 Come hither, leave the palace, from those doors  
 Advance, and in a soft persuasive strain  
 With me unite your father to accost,  
 Forget past enmity, and to your friends  
 Be reconciled, for 'twixt us is a league  
 Of peace established, and my wrath subsides.

[*The SONS of JASON and MEDEA enter.*]

Take hold of his right hand. Ah me, how great  
 Are my afflictions oft as I revolve  
 A deed of darkness in my labouring soul !  
 How long, alas ! my sons, are ye ordained  
 To live, how long to stretch forth those dear arms ?  
 Wretch that I am ! how much am I disposed  
 To weep ! how subject to each fresh alarm !  
 For I at length desisting from that strife,  
 Which with your sire I rashly did maintain,  
 Feel gushing tears bedew my tender cheek.

CHOR. Fresh tears too from these eyes have forced  
 their way ;  
 And may no greater ill than that which now  
 We suffer, overtake us !

JAS. I applaud  
 Your present conduct, and your former rage  
 Condemn not ; for 'tis natural that the race  
 Of women should be angry when their lord  
 For a new consort trucks them. But your heart  
 Is for the better changed, and you, though late,

At length acknowledge the resistless power  
Of reason ; this is acting like a dame  
Endued with prudence. But for you, my sons,  
Abundant safety your considerate sire  
Hath with the favour of the gods procured,  
For ye, I trust, shall with my future race  
Bear the first rank in this Corinthian realm,  
Advance to full maturity ; the rest,  
Aided by each benignant god, your father  
Shall soon accomplish. Virtuously trained up  
May I behold you at a riper age  
Obtain pre-eminence o'er those I hate.  
But, ha ! Why with fresh tears do you thus keep  
Those eyelids moist ? From your averted cheeks  
Why is the colour fled, or why these words  
Receive you not with a complacent ear ?

MED. Nothing : my thoughts were busied for these  
children.

JAS. Be of good courage, and for them depend  
On my protecting care.

MED. I will obey,  
Nor disbelieve the promise thou hast made :  
But woman, ever frail, is prone to shed  
Involuntary tears.

JAS. But why bewail  
With such deep groans these children ?

MED. Them I bore ;  
And that our sons might live, while to the gods  
Thou didst address thy vows, a pitying thought  
Entered my soul ; 'twas whether this could be.  
But of th' affairs on which thou com'st to hold  
This conference with me, have I told a part  
Already, and to thee will now disclose  
The sequel : since the rulers of this land  
Resolve to banish me, as well I know  
That it were best for me to give no umbrage,  
Or to the king of Corinth, or to thee,  
By dwelling here : because I to this house  
Seem to bear enmity, from these domains  
Will I depart : but urge thy suit to Creon,

Now therefore I commend, now deem thee wise  
 In forming this connection for my sake :  
 But I was void of wisdom, or had borne  
 A part in these designs, the genial bed  
 Obsequiously attended, and with joy  
 Performed each menial office for the bride.  
 I will not speak in too reproachful terms  
 Of my own sex ; but we, weak women, are  
 What nature formed us ; therefore our defects  
 Thou must not imitate, nor yet return  
 Folly for folly. I submit and own  
 My judgment was erroneous, but at length  
 Have I formed better counsels. O my sons,  
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 To weep ! how subject to each fresh alarm !  
 For I at length desisting from that strife,  
 Which with your sire I rashly did maintain,  
 Feel gushing tears bedew my tender cheek.

CHOR. Fresh tears too from these eyes have forced  
 their way ;

And may no greater ill than that which now  
 We suffer, overtake us !

JAS.

I applaud

Your present conduct, and your former rage  
 Condemn not ; for 'tis natural that the race  
 Of women should be angry when their lord  
 For a new consort trucks them. But your heart  
*Is for the better changed, and you, though late,*

At length acknowledge the restless power  
Of reason ; this is acting like a dame  
Endued with prudence. But for you, my sons,  
Abundant safety your considerate sire  
Hath with the favour of the gods procured.  
For ye, I trust, shall with my future race  
Bear the first rank in this Corinthian realm.  
Advance to full manhood : the rest,  
Aided by each benignant god, your father  
Shall soon accomplish. Through my prayers  
May I behold you at a riper age  
Obtain pre-eminence, the prize I crave.  
But, ha ! Why with fresh tears do you moisten  
Those eyelids moist ? From your sweet cheeks  
Why is the colour fled, or why those words  
Receive you not with a complacent ear ?

MED. Nothing my thoughts were meant for here  
Children.

JAS. Be of good courage and for them depend  
On my protecting care.

MED. I will obey.  
Nor disbelieve the promise that was made.  
But woman, ever frail, a prize is met  
Involuntary tears.

JAS. But why weepst thou  
With such deep groans these children ?

MED. When I think  
And that our sons might live while in the city  
Thou dost address thy sons, and so long  
Entered my soul, that whether I should be  
Out of the affairs or whether thou shouldst be  
This conference with me, I have not yet  
Already, and as fate will now decree  
The sequel : since the rulers of the state  
Resolve to banish me, as well as thee  
That it were best for me to go in silence  
Or to the king of Corinth, as thou  
By dwelling here : because  
Seem to bear enmity, from thee  
Will I depart : but might I

That under thy paternal care our sons  
May be trained up, nor from this realm expelled.

JAS. Though doubtful of success, I yet am bound  
To make th' attempt.

MED. Thou rather shouldst enjoin  
Thy bride her royal father to entreat,  
That he these children's exile may reverse.

JAS. With pleasure ; and I doubt not but on her,  
If like her sex humane, I shall prevail.

MED. To aid thee in this difficult emprise  
Shall be my care, for I to her will send  
Gifts that I know in beauty far exceed  
The gorgeous works of man ; a tissued vest  
And golden crown the children shall present,  
But with the utmost speed these ornaments  
One of thy menial train must hither bring,  
For not with one, but with ten thousand blessings  
Shall she be gratified ; thee, best of men,  
Obtaining for the partner of her bed,  
And in possession of those splendid robes  
Which erst the sun my grandsire did bestow  
On his descendants : take them in your hands,  
My children, to the happy royal bride  
Instantly bear them, and in dower bestow,  
For such a gift as ought not to be scorned  
Shall she receive.

JAS. Why rashly part with these ?  
Of tissued robes or gold can you suppose  
The palace destitute ? These trappings keep,  
Nor to another give : for if the dame  
On me place real value, well I know  
My love she to all treasures will prefer.

MED. Speak not so hastily : the gods themselves  
By gifts are swayed, as fame relates ; and gold  
Hath a far greater influence o'er the souls  
Of mortals than the most persuasive words :  
With fortune, the propitious heavens conspire  
To add fresh glories to thy youthful bride,  
All here submits to her despotic sway.

But I my children's exile would redeem,  
 Though at the cost of life, not gold alone.  
 But these adjacent mansions of the king  
 Soon as ye enter, O ye little ones,  
 Your sire's new consort and my queen entreat  
 That ye may not be banished from this land :  
 At the same time these ornaments present,  
 For most important is it that these gifts  
 With her own hands the royal dame receive.  
 Go forth, delay not, and, if ye succeed,  
 Your mother with the welcome tidings greet.

[*Exeunt* JASON and SONS.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

Now from my soul each hope is fled,  
 I deem those hapless children dead,  
     They rush to meet the wound :  
 Mistrustful of no latent pest  
 Th' exulting bride will seize the gorgeous vest,  
     Her auburn tresses crowned  
 By baleful Pluto, shall she stand,  
 And take the presents with an eager hand.

I. 2.

The splendid robe of thousand dyes  
 Will fascinate her raptured eyes,  
     And tempt her till she wear  
 The golden diadem, arrayed  
 To meet her bridegroom in th' infernal shade  
     She thus into the snare  
 Of death shall be surprised by fate,  
 Nor 'scape remorseless Atë's direful hate.

II. I.

But as for thee whose nuptials bring  
 The proud alliance of a king,



'Midst dangers unespied  
 Thou madly rushing, aid'st the blow  
 Ordained by Heaven to lay thy children low,  
 And thy lamented bride:  
 O man, how little dost thou know  
 That o'er thy head impends severest woe !

## II. 2.

Thy anguish I no less bemoan,  
 No less for thee, O mother, groan,  
 Bent on a horrid deed,  
 Thy children who resolv'st to slay,  
 Nor fear'st to take their guiltless lives away.  
 Those innocents must bleed,  
 Because, disdainful of thy charms,  
 The husband flies to a new consort's arms.

## ATTENDANT, SONS, MEDEA, CHORUS.

ATT. Your sons, my honoured mistress, are set free  
 From banishment ; in her own hands those gifts  
 With courtesy the royal bride received ;  
 Hence have your sons obtained their peace.

MED. No matter.

ATT. Why stand you in confusion, when befriended  
 By prosperous fortune ?

MED. Ah !

ATT. This harsh reception  
 Accords not with the tidings which I bring.

MED. Alas ! and yet again I say, alas !

ATT. Have I related with unconscious tongue  
 Some great calamity, by the fond hope  
 Of bearing glad intelligence misled ?

MED. For having told what thou hast told, no blame  
 To thee do I impute.

ATT. But on the ground  
 Why fix those eyes, and shed abundant tears ?

MED. Necessity constrains me : for the gods  
 Of Erebus and I in evil hour  
 Our baleful machinations have devised.

ATT. Be of good cheer ; for in your children still  
Are you successful.

MED. 'Midst the realms of night  
Others I first will plunge. Ah, wretched me !

ATT. Not you alone are from your children torn,  
Mortal you are, and therefore must endure  
Calamity with patience.

MED. I these counsels  
Will practise : but go thou into the palace,  
And for the children whatsoever to-day  
Is requisite, make ready. *[Exit ATTENDANT.]*

O my sons !  
My sons ! ye have a city and a house  
Where, leaving hapless me behind, without  
A mother ye for ever shall reside.  
But I to other realms an exile go,  
Ere any help from you I could derive,  
Or see you blest ; the hymeneal pomp,  
The bride, the genial couch, for you adorn,  
And in these hands the kindled torch sustain.  
How wretched am I through my own perverseness !  
You, O my sons, I then in vain have nurtured,  
In vain have toiled, and, wasted with fatigue,  
Suffered the pregnant matron's grievous throes.  
On you, in my afflictions, many hopes  
I founded erst : that ye with pious care  
Would foster my old age, and on the bier  
Extend me after death—much envied lot  
Of mortals ; but these pleasing anxious thoughts  
Are vanished now ; for, losing you, a life  
Of bitterness and anguish shall I lead.  
But as for you, my sons, with those dear eyes  
Fated no more your mother to behold,  
Hence are ye hastening to a world unknown.  
Why do ye gaze on me with such a look  
Of tenderness, or wherefore smile ? for these  
Are your last smiles. Ah wretched, wretched me !  
What shall I do ? My resolution fails.  
Sparkling with joy now I their looks have seen,



My friends, I can no more. To those past schemes  
 I bid adieu, and with me from this land  
 My children will convey. Why should I cause  
 A twofold portion of distress to fall  
 On my own head, that I may grieve the sire  
 By punishing his sons? This shall not be:  
 Such counsels I dismiss. But in my purpose  
 What means this change? Can I prefer derision,  
 And with impunity permit the foe  
 To 'scape? My utmost courage I must rouse:  
 For the suggestion of these tender thoughts  
 Proceeds from an enervate heart. My sons,  
 Enter the regal mansion. [*Exeunt* SONS.]

As for those

Who deem that to be present were unholy  
 While I the destined victims offer up,  
 Let them see to it. This uplifted arm  
 Shall never shrink. Alas! alas! my soul  
 Commit not such a deed. Unhappy woman,  
 Desist and spare thy children; we will live  
 Together, they in foreign realms shall cheer  
 Thy exile. No, by those avenging fiends  
 Who dwell with Pluto in the realms beneath,  
 This shall not be, nor will I ever leave  
 My sons to be insulted by their foes.  
 They certainly must die; since then they must,  
 I bore and I will slay them: 'tis a deed  
 Resolved on, nor my purpose will I change.  
 Full well I know that now the royal bride  
 Wears on her head the magic diadem,  
 And in the variegated robe expires:  
 But, hurried on by fate, I tread a path  
 Of utter wretchedness, and them will plunge  
 Into one yet more wretched. To my sons  
 Fain would I say: "O stretch forth your right hands,  
 Ye children, for your mother to embrace.  
 O dearest hands, ye lips to me most dear,  
 Engaging features and ingenuous looks,  
 May ye be blest, but in another world;

For by the treacherous conduct of your sire  
Are ye bereft of all this earth bestowed.  
Farewell, sweet kisses—tender limbs, farewell !  
And fragrant breath ! I never more can bear  
To look on you, my children.” My afflictions  
Have conquered me ; I now am well aware  
What crimes I venture on : but rage, the cause  
Of woes most grievous to the human race,  
Over my better reason hath prevailed.

CHOR. In subtle questions I full many a time  
Have heretofore engaged, and this great point  
Debated, whether woman should extend  
Her search into abstruse and hidden truths.  
But we too have a Muse, who with our sex  
Associates to expound the mystic lore  
Of wisdom, though she dwell not with us all.  
Yet haply a small number may be found,  
Among the multitude of females, dear  
To the celestial Muses. I maintain,  
They who in total inexperience live,  
Nor ever have been parents, are more happy  
Than they to whom much progeny belongs.  
Because the childless, having never tried  
Whether more pain or pleasure from their offspring  
To mortals rises, 'scape unnumbered toils.  
But I observe that they, whose fruitful house  
Is with a lovely race of infants filled,  
Are harassed with perpetual cares ; how first  
To train them up in virtue, and whence leave  
Fit portions for their sons ; but on the good  
Or worthless, whether they these toils bestow  
Remains involved in doubt. I yet must name  
One evil the most grievous, to which all  
The human race is subject ; some there are  
Who for their sons have gained sufficient wealth,  
Seen them to full maturity advance,  
And decked with every virtue, when, by fate  
If thus it be ordained, comes death unseen  
And hurries them to Pluto's gloomy realm.

Can it be any profit to the gods  
To heap the loss of children, that one ill  
Than all the rest more bitter, on mankind ?

MED. My friends, with anxious expectation long  
Here have I waited, from within to learn  
How fortune will dispose the dread event.  
But one of Jason's servants I behold  
With breathless speed advancing : his looks show  
That he some recent mischief would relate.

MESSENGER, MEDEA, CHORUS.

MES. O thou, who impiously hast wrought a deed  
Of horror, fly, Medea, from this land,  
Fly with such haste as not to leave the bark  
Or from the car alight.

MED. What crime, to merit  
A banishment like this, have I committed ?

MES. By thy enchantments is the royal maid  
This instant dead, and Creon, too, her sire.

MED. Most glorious are the tidings you relate :  
Henceforth shall you be numbered with my friends  
And benefactors.

MES. Ha ! what words are these ?  
Dost thou preserve thy senses yet entire ?  
O woman, hath not madness fired thy brain ?  
The wrongs thou to the royal house hast done  
Hear'st thou with joy, nor shudder'st at the tale ?

MED. Somewhat I have in answer to your speech :  
But be not too precipitate, my friend ;  
Inform me how they died, for twofold joy  
Wilt thou afford, if wretchedly they perished.

MES. When with their father thy two sons arrived  
And went into the mansion of the bride,  
We servants, who had shared thy griefs, rejoiced ;  
For a loud rumour instantly prevailed  
That all past strife betwixt thy lord and thee  
Was reconciled. Some kissed the children's hands,  
And some their auburn tresses. I with joy  
To those apartments where the women dwell

Attended them. Our mistress, the new object  
Of homage such as erst to thee was paid,  
Ere she beheld thy sons on Jason cast  
A look of fond desire : but then she veiled  
Her eyes, and turned her pallid cheeks away  
Disgusted at their coming, till his voice  
Appeased her anger with these gentle words :  
“ O be not thou inveterate 'gainst thy friends,  
But lay aside disdain, thy beauteous face  
Turn hither, and let amity for those  
Thy husband loves still warm that generous breast.  
Accept these gifts, and to thy father sue,  
That, for my sake, the exile of my sons  
He will remit.” Soon as the princess saw  
Thy glittering ornaments, she could resist  
No longer, but to all her lord's requests  
Assented, and before thy sons were gone  
Far from the regal mansion with their sire,  
The vest, resplendent with a thousand dyes,  
Put on, and o'er her loosely floating hair  
Placing the golden crown, before the mirror  
Her tresses braided, and with smiles surveyed  
Th' inanimated semblance of her charms :  
Then rising from her seat across the palace  
Walked with a delicate and graceful step,  
In the rich gifts exulting, and oft turned  
Enraptured eyes on her own stately neck,  
Reflected to her view : but now a scene  
Of horror followed ; her complexion changed,  
And she reeled backward, trembling every limb ;  
Scarce did her chair receive her as she sunk  
In time to save her falling to the ground.  
One of her menial train, an aged dame,  
Possessed with an idea that the wrath  
Either of Pan or of some god unknown  
Her mistress had invaded, in shrill tone  
Poured forth a vow to Heaven, till from her mouth  
She saw form issue, in their sockets roll  
Her wildly glaring eyeballs, and the blood

Leave her whole frame ; a shriek, that differed far  
From her first complaints, then gave she. In an instant  
This to her father's house, and that to tell  
The bridegroom the mischance which had befallen  
His consort, rushed impetuous ; through the dome  
The frequent steps of those who to and fro  
Ran in confusion did resound. But soon  
As the fleet courser at the goal arrives,  
She who was silent, and had closed her eyes,  
Roused from her swoon, and burst forth into groans  
Most dreadful, for 'gainst her two evils warred :  
Placed on her head the golden crown poured forth  
A wondrous torrent of devouring flames,  
And the embroidered robes, thy children's gifts,  
Preyed on the hapless virgin's tender flesh ;  
Covered with fire she started from her seat  
Shaking her hair, and from her head the crown  
With violence attempting to remove,  
But still more firmly did the heated gold  
Adhere, and the fanned blaze with double lustre  
Burst forth as she her streaming tresses shook :  
Subdued by fate, at length she to the ground  
Fell prostrate : scarce could any one have known her  
Except her father ; for those radiant eyes  
Dropped from their sockets, that majestic face  
Its wonted features lost, and blood with fire  
Ran down her head in intermingled streams,  
While from her bones the flesh, like weeping pitch,  
Melted away, through the consuming power  
Of those unseen enchantments ; 'twas a sight  
Most horrible : all feared to touch the corpse,  
For her disastrous end had taught us caution.  
Meanwhile her hapless sire, who knew not aught  
Of this calamity, as he with haste  
Entered the palace, stumbled o'er her body ;  
Instantly shrieking out, then with his arms  
Infolded, kissed it oft, and, " O my child,  
My wretched child," exclaimed ; " what envious god,  
Author of thy dishonourable fall,

Of thee bereaves an old decrepit man  
 Whom the grave claims? With thee I wish to die,  
 My daughter." Scarcely had the hoary father  
 These lamentations ended ; to uplift  
 His feeble body striving, he adhered  
 (As ivy with its pliant tendrils clings  
 Around the laurel) to the tissued vest.  
 Dire was the conflict ; he to raise his knee  
 From earth attempted, but his daughter's corse  
 Still held him down, or if with greater force  
 He dragged it onward, from his bones he tore  
 The aged flesh : at length he sunk, and breathed  
 In agonizing pangs his soul away ;  
 For he against such evil could bear up  
 No longer. To each other close in death  
 The daughter and her father lie : their fate  
 Demands our tears. Warned by my words, with haste  
 From this domain convey thyself, or vengeance  
 Will overtake thee for this impious deed.  
 Not now for the first time do I esteem  
 Human affairs a shadow. Without fear  
 Can I pronounce, they who appear endued  
 With wisdom, and most plausibly trick out  
 Specious harangues, deserve to be accounted  
 The worst of fools. The man completely blest  
 Exists not. Some in overflowing wealth  
 May be more fortunate, but none are happy.

CHOR. Heaven its collected store of evil seems  
 This day resolved with justice to pour down  
 On perjured Jason. Thy untimely fate  
 How do we pity, O thou wretched daughter  
 Of Creon, who in Pluto's mansions go'st  
 To celebrate thy nuptial feast.

MED. My friends,  
 I am resolved, as soon as I have slain  
 My children, from these regions to depart,  
 Nor through inglorious sloth will I abandon  
 My sons to perish by detested hands ;  
 They certainly must die : since then they must,



I bore and I will slay them. O my heart!  
 Be armed with tenfold firmness. What avails it  
 To loiter, when inevitable ills  
 Remain to be accomplished? Take the sword,  
 And, O my hand, on to the goal that ends  
 Their life, nor let one intervening thought  
 Of pity or maternal tenderness  
 Suspend thy purpose: for this one short day  
 Forget how fondly thou didst love thy sons,  
 How bring them forth, and after that lament  
 Their cruel fate: although thou art resolved  
 To slay, yet hast thou ever held them dear.  
 But I am of all women the most wretched.

[*Exit MEDEA.*]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Earth, and thou sun, whose fervid blaze  
 From pole to pole illumines each distant land,  
 View this abandoned woman, ere she raise  
 Against her children's lives a ruthless hand;  
 For from thy race, divinely bright,  
 They spring, and should the sons of gods be slain  
 By man, 'twere dreadful. O restrain  
 Her fury, thou celestial source of light,  
 Ere she with blood pollute your regal dome,  
 Chased by the demons hence let this Erinny's roam.

II.

The pregnant matron's throes in vain  
 Hast thou endured, and borne a lovely race,  
 O thou, who o'er th' inhospitable main,  
 Where the Cyanean rocks scarce leave a space,  
 Thy daring voyage didst pursue.  
 Why, O thou wretch, thy soul doth anger rend,  
 Such as in murder soon must end?  
 They who with kindred gore are stained shall rue  
 Their guilt inexpiable: full well I know  
 The gods will on this house inflict severest woe.

1st SON [*within.*] Ah me ! what can I do, or whither fly  
To 'scape a mother's arm ?

2nd SON [*within.*] I cannot tell :  
For, O my dearest brother, we are lost.

CHOR. Heard you the children's shrieks ? I (O thou  
dame,

Whom woes and evil fortune still attend)  
Will rush into the regal dome, from death  
Resolved to snatch thy sons.

1st SON [*within.*] We by the gods  
Conjure you to protect us in this hour  
Of utmost peril, for the treacherous snare  
Hath caught us, and we perish by the sword.

CHOR. Art thou a rock, O wretch, or steel, to slay  
With thine own hand that generous race of sons  
Whom thou didst bear ? I hitherto have heard  
But of one woman, who in ancient days  
Smote her dear children, Ino, by the gods  
With frenzy stung, when Jove's malignant queen  
Distracted from her mansion drove her forth.  
But she, yet reeking with the impious gore  
Of her own progeny, into the waves  
Plunged headlong from the ocean's craggy beach,  
And shared with her two sons one common fate.  
Can there be deeds more horrible than these  
Left for succeeding ages to produce ?  
Disastrous union with the female sex,  
How great a source of woes art thou to man !

JASON, CHORUS.

JAS. Ye dames who near the portals stand, is she  
Who hath committed these atrocious crimes,  
Medea, in the palace, or by flight  
Hath she retreated ? For beneath the ground  
Must she conceal herself, or, borne on wings,  
Ascend the heights of Ether, to avoid  
The vengeance due for Corinth's royal house.  
Having destroyed the rulers of the land,  
Can she presume she shall escape unhurt  
From these abodes ? But less am I concerned



On her account, than for my sons ; since they  
Whom she hath injured will on her inflict  
Due punishment : but hither am I come  
To save my children's lives, lest on their heads  
The noble Creon's kindred should retaliate  
That impious murder by their mother wrought.

CHOR. Thou know'st not yet, O thou unhappy man,  
What ills thou art involved in, or these words  
Had not escaped thee.

JAS. Ha, what ills are these  
Thou speak'st of? Would she also murder me?

CHOR. By their own mother's hand thy sons are slain.

JAS. What can you mean? How utterly, O woman,  
Have you undone me !

CHOR. Be assured thy children  
Are now no more.

JAS. Where was it, or within  
Those mansions or without, that she destroyed  
Our progeny?

CHOR. As soon as thou these doors  
Hast oped, their weltering corpses wilt thou view.

JAS. Loose the firm bars and bolts of yonder gates  
With speed, ye servants, that I may behold  
This scene of twofold misery, the remains  
Of the deceased, and punish her who slew them.

MEDEA, *in a chariot drawn by dragons*, JASON, CHORUS.

MED. With levers wherefore dost thou shake those doors  
In quest of them who are no more, and me  
Who dared to perpetrate the bloody deed?  
Desist from such unprofitable toil :  
But if there yet be aught that thou with me  
Canst want, speak freely whatsoe'er thou wilt :  
For with that hand me never shalt thou reach,  
Such steeds the sun my grandsire gives to whirl  
This chariot and protect me from my foes.

JAS. O most abandoned woman, by the gods,  
By me and all the human race abhorred,  
Who with the sword could pierce the sons you bore,

And ruin me, a childless wretched man,  
Yet after you this impious deed have dared  
To perpetrate, still view the radiant sun  
And fostering earth ; may vengeance overtake you !  
For I that reason have regained which erst  
Forsook me, when to the abodes of Greece  
I from your home, from a Barbarian realm,  
Conveyed you, to your sire a grievous bane,  
And the corrupt betrayer of that land  
Which nurtured you. Some envious god first roused  
Your evil genius from the shades of hell  
For my undoing : after you had slain  
Your brother at the altar, you embarked  
In the famed Argo. Deeds like these a life  
Of guilt commenced ; with me in wedlock joined,  
You bore those sons, whom you have now destroyed  
Because I left your bed. No Grecian dame  
Would e'er have ventured on a deed so impious ;  
Yet I to them preferred you for my bride :  
This was a hostile union, and to me  
The most destructive ; for my arms received  
No woman, but a lioness more fell  
Than Tuscan Scylla. Vainly should I strive  
To wound you with reproaches numberless,  
For you are grown insensible of shame !  
Vile sorceress, and polluted with the blood  
Of your own children, perish—my hard fate  
While I lament, for I shall ne'er enjoy  
My lovely bride, nor with those sons, who owe  
To me their birth and nurture, ever hold  
Sweet converse. They, alas ! can live no more,  
Utterly lost to their desponding sire.

MED. Much could I say in answer to this charge,  
Were not the benefits from me received,  
And thy abhorred ingratitude, well known  
To Jove, dread sire. Yet was it not ordained,  
Scorning my bed, that thou shouldst lead a life  
Of fond delight, and ridicule my griefs ;  
Nor that the royal virgin thou didst wed,

Or Creon, who to thee his daughter gave,  
Should drive me from these regions unavenged.  
A lioness then call me if thou wilt,  
Or by the name of Scylla, whose abode  
Was in Etrurian caverns. For thy heart,  
As justice prompted, in my turn I wounded.

JAS. You grieve, and are the partner of my woes.

MED. Be well assured I am : but what assuages  
My grief is this, that thou no more canst scoff.

JAS. How vile a mother, O my sons, was yours !

MED. How did ye perish through your father's lust !

JAS. But my right hand was guiltless of their death.

MED. Not so thy cruel taunts, and that new marriage.

JAS. Was my new marriage a sufficient cause  
For thee to murder them ?

MED. Canst thou suppose  
Such wrongs sit light upon the female breast ?

JAS. On a chaste woman's ; but your soul abounds  
With wickedness.

MED. Thy sons are now no more,  
This will afflict thee.

JAS. O'er your head, alas !  
They now two evil geniuses impend.

MED. The gods know who these ruthless deeds began.

JAS. They know the hateful temper of your soul.

MED. In detestation thee I hold, and loathe  
Thy conversation.

JAS. Yours too I abhor ;  
But we with ease may settle on what terms  
To part for ever.

MED. Name those terms. Say how  
Shall I proceed ? For such my ardent wish.

JAS. Let me inter the dead, and o'er them weep.

MED. Thou shalt not. For their corpses with this hand  
Am I resolved to bury in the grove  
Sacred to awful Juno, who protects  
The citadel of Corinth, lest their foes  
Insult them, and with impious rage pluck up  
The monumental stone. I in this realm

Of Sisyphus moreover will ordain  
A solemn festival and mystic rites,  
To make a due atonement for my guilt  
In having slain them. To Erectheus' land  
I now am on my road, where I shall dwell  
With Ægeus, great Pandion's son ; but thou  
Shalt vilely perish as thy crimes deserve,  
Beneath the shattered relics of thy bark,  
The Argo, crushed ; such is the bitter end  
Of our espousals and thy faith betrayed.

JAS. May the Erinnys of our slaughtered sons,  
And justice, who requites each murderous deed,  
Destroy you utterly !

MED. Will any god  
Or demon hear thy curses, O thou wretch,  
False to thy oath, and to the sacred laws  
Of hospitality ?

JAS. Most impious woman,  
Those hands yet reeking with your children's gore—

MED. Go to the palace, and inter thy bride.

JAS. Bereft of both my sons, I thither go.

MED. Not yet enough lament'st thou : to increase  
Thy sorrows, mayst thou live till thou art old !

JAS. Ye dearest children.

MED. To their mother dear,  
But not to thee.

JAS. Yet them have you destroyed.

MED. That I might punish thee.

JAS. One more fond kiss  
On their loved lips, ah me ! would I imprint.

MED. Now wouldst thou speak to them, and in thine arms  
Clasp those whom living thou didst banish hence.

JAS. Allow me, I conjure you by the gods,  
My children's tender bodies to embrace.

MED. Thou shalt not : these presumptuous words in vain  
By thee were hazarded.

JAS. Jove, hear'st thou this,  
How I with scorn am driven away, how wronged  
By that detested lioness, whose fangs

Have slain her children ? Yet shall my loud complaints,  
While here I fix my seat, if 'tis allowed,  
And this be possible, call down the gods  
To witness that you hinder me from touching  
My murdered sons, and paying the deceased  
Funereal honours. Would to Heaven I ne'er  
Had seen them born to perish by your hand !

CHOR. Throned on Olympus, with his sovereign nod,  
Jove unexpectedly performs the schemes  
Divine foreknowledge planned ; our firmest hopes  
Oft fail us : but the god still finds the means  
Of compassing what man could ne'er have looked for ;  
And thus doth this important business end.

# THE PHŒNICIAN DAMSELS.

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

<b>JOCASTA.</b>	<b>CREON.</b>
<b>ATTENDANT.</b>	<b>MENÆCEUS.</b>
<b>ANTIGONE.</b>	<b>TIRESIAS.</b>
<b>CHORUS OF PHŒNICIAN DAMSELS.</b>	<b>MESSINGER.</b>
<b>POLYNICES.</b>	<b>ANOTHER MESSENGER.</b>
<b>ETEOCLES.</b>	<b>ŒDIPUS.</b>

SCENE—AN OPEN COURT BEFORE THE PALACE AT THEBÆ.

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### JOCASTA.

O THOU, who through the starry heavens divid'st  
Thy path, and on a golden chariot sitt'st  
Exalted, radiant sun, beneath the hoofs  
Of whose swift steeds the fiery volumes roll,  
How inauspicious, o'er the Theban race  
Didst thou dart forth thy beams, the day when Cadmus  
Came to this land from the Phœnician coast.  
He erst obtained Harmonia for his bride,  
Daughter of Venus ; of their loves the fruit  
Was Polydorus, and from him, as fame  
Relates, descended Labdacus, the sire  
Of Laius. From Menæceus I derive  
My birth ; my brother Creon and myself  
From the same mother spring : but I am called  
Jocasta, 'twas the name my father gave ;  
He royal Laius married ; but when long  
Our bed had proved unfruitful, he to search  
The oracle of Phœbus went, and sued  
To the prophetic god, that he our house  
Would cheer with an auspicious race of sons :

The god replied, "Beware, O thou who rul'st  
The martial Thebans, strive not to obtain  
A progeny against the will of Heaven :  
If thou beget a son, that son shall slay thee,  
And all thy household shall be plunged in blood."  
He overcome by lust, and flushed with wine,  
In an unguarded moment disobeyed :  
But I no sooner had brought forth the child,  
Than he, grown conscious of his foul offence  
Against Apollo's mandate, to his shepherds  
The new-born infant gave, in Juno's meads,  
And on Cithæron's hill, to be exposed,  
Maiming his feet with pointed steel, whence Greece  
Hath called him Œdipus. But they who fed  
The steeds of Polypus, soon taking up,  
Conveyed him to their home, and in the hands  
Of their kind mistress placed, she at her breast  
Nurtured my son, and artfully persuaded  
Her lord that she was mother to the boy :  
Soon as the manly beard his cheek o'erspread,  
Aware from his own knowledge, or informed  
Of the deceit, solicitous to learn  
Who were his parents, to Apollo's shrine  
He journeyed ; and at the same time was Laius,  
My husband, hastening hither, to inquire  
Whether the child he had exposed was dead.  
In Phocis, where two severed roads unite,  
They met : the charioteer of Laius cried  
In an imperious tone, "Give way to kings,  
Thou stranger" : yet the silent youth advanced,  
With inborn greatness fired, till o'er his feet  
Distained with gore the steel-hoofed coursers trod ;  
Hence (for what need have I to speak of aught  
That's foreign to my woes ?) th' unconscious son  
Slew his own father, seized the spoils, and gave  
To Polybus, who nurtured him, the car.  
But when with ruthless fangs the Sphynx laid waste  
The city, and my husband was no more,  
My brother Creon by the herald's voice



Proclaimed that whosoever could expound  
Th' enigma by that crafty virgin forged  
Should win me for his bride: that mystic clue  
The luckless Œdipus, my son, unravelled;  
Hence o'er this land appointed king, he gained  
For his reward a sceptre—wretched youth!—  
Unwittingly espousing me who bore him;  
Nor yet was I his mother then aware  
That we committed incest. I produced  
To my own son four children; two were males,  
Eteocles and Polynices, famed  
For martial prowess; daughters two, the one  
Her father called Ismene, but the first  
I named Antigone. Soon as he learned  
That I whom he had wedded was his mother,  
The miserable Œdipus, o'erwhelmed  
With woes accumulated, from their sockets  
Tore with a golden clasp his bleeding eyes.  
But since the beard o'ershaded my sons' cheeks,  
Their sire they in a dungeon have confined,  
The memory of this sad event t' efface,  
For which they needed every subtle art.  
Within these mansions he still lives, but, sick  
With evil fortunes, on his sons pours forth  
The most unholy curses, that this house  
They by the sword may portion out. Alarmed  
Lest Heaven those vows accomplish if they dwell  
Together, they by compact have resolved  
The younger brother Polynices first  
A voluntary exile shall depart,  
And, with Eteocles remaining here  
To wield the sceptre of this realm, exchange  
His station year by year: but th' elder-born  
Since he was seated on the lofty throne  
Departs not thence, and from this land expels  
The injured Polynices, who, to Argos  
Repairing, with Adrastus hath contracted  
Most strict affinity, and hither brings  
A numerous squadron of heroic youths;



These bulwarks for their sevenfold gates renowned  
 E'en now in arms approaching, he demands  
 His father's sceptre, and an equal share  
 Of the domain. But I to end their strife  
 On Polynices have prevailed to come,  
 Under the sanction of a warrior's faith  
 And parley with his brother, ere the hosts  
 In battle join : the messenger I sent  
 Informs me he the summons will attend.  
 O thou who dwell'st amidst Heaven's lucid folds,  
 Save us, dread Jove, and reconcile my children :  
 For thou, if thou art wise, wilt ne'er permit  
 That one poor mortal should be always wretched.

[*Exit* JOCASTA.]

ANTIGONE, ATTENDANT.

ATT. O fair Antigone, illustrious blossom  
 Of your paternal house, since from your chamber  
 Your mother hath allowed you to come forth  
 At your request, and from these roofs behold  
 The Argive hosts, stay here, while I the road  
 Explore, lest in our passage, if we meet  
 Some citizen, malignant tongues should blame  
 Both me, the servant, who obey, and you  
 For giving such command. But their whole camp  
 Since I have searched, to you will I relate  
 All that these eyes have witnessed, and whate'er  
 I heard amidst the Argives, when, employed  
 By both your brothers, I 'twixt either host  
 Bore pledges of their compact. But these mansions  
 No citizen approaches : haste, ascend  
 Yon ancient stairs of cedar, and o'erlook  
 The spacious fields that skirt Ismenos' stream  
 And Dirce's fountains. What a host of foes !

ANT. Thy aged arm stretch forth, and, as I climb  
 The narrow height, my tottering steps sustain.

ATT. Give me your hand, for at a lucky hour  
 You mount the turret : the Pelasgian host  
*Is now in motion, and the troops divide.*

ANT. Thou venerable daughter of Latona,  
Thrice sacred goddess, Hecate, how gleams  
With brazen armour the whole field around !

ATT. For Polynices to his native land  
Returns not like a man of little note,  
But comes in anger, by unnumbered steeds  
Attended, and the loudest din of arms.

ANT. Are the gates closed? What barriers guard the walls  
Reared by Amphion's skill ?

ATT. Be of good cheer.  
The city is made safe within. But look  
At him who first advances, if you wish  
To know him.

ANT. By those snowy plumes distinguished,  
Before the ranks who marches in the van,  
With ease sustaining on his nervous arm  
That brazen shield ?

ATT. A general, royal maid.

ANT. Who is he? In what country was he born,  
Old man, inform me, and what name he bears.

ATT. Mycene glories in the warrior's birth,  
But near the marsh of Lerna he resides ;  
His name's Hippomedon, a mighty chief.

ANT. Ah, with what pride, how terrible an aspect,  
How like an earthborn giant doth he move !  
His targe with stars is covered, and that air  
Resembles not the feeble race of man.

ATT. Behold you not the chief who Dirce's stream  
Is crossing !

ANT. In what different armour clad !  
But who is he ?

ATT. Tydeus, the noble son  
Of Ceneus ; in embattled fields his breast  
With true Ætolian courage is inspired.

ANT. Is he, O veteran, husband to the sister  
Of Polynices' consort ? How arrayed  
In party-coloured mail, a half Barbarian !

ATT. All the Ætolians, O my daughter, armed  
With bucklers, can expertly hurl the lance.

ANT. But whence, old man, art thou assured of this ?

ATT. The various figures wrought upon the shields  
I noticed at the time I from the walls  
Went to your brother with the pledge of truce :  
When these I see, their wearers well I know.

ANT. But who is he who moves round Zethus' tomb,  
A youth with streaming ringlets, and with eyes  
Horribly glaring ?

ATT. He too is a chief.

ANT. What multitudes in burnished armour clad  
Follow his steps !

ATT. From Atalanta sprung.  
Parthenopæus is the name he bears.

ANT. May Dian, who o'er craggy mountain speeds,  
Attended by his mother, with her shafts  
Transpierce th' audacious youth who comes to sack  
My city !

ATT. These rash vows suppress, O daughter,  
For they with justice these domains invade,  
And therefore will the gods, I fear, discern  
Their better cause.

ANT. But where is he, whom Fate  
Decreed in evil hour from the same womb  
With me to spring ? Say, O thou dear old man,  
Where's Polynices ?

ATT. He beside the tomb  
Of Niobe's seven virgin daughters stands  
Close to Adrastus. See you him ?

ANT. I see him,  
But not distinctly ; I can just discern  
A faint resemblance of that kindred form,  
The image of that bosom. Would to heaven,  
Borne on the skirts of yonder passing cloud,  
Through the ethereal paths, I with these feet  
Could to my brother urge my swift career !  
Then would I fling my arms round the dear neck  
Of him who long hath been a wretched exile.  
How gracefully, in golden arms arrayed,  
*Bright as Hyperion's radiant beams, he moves !*

ATT. To fill your soul with joy, the chief, these doors,  
Secured by an inviolable truce,  
Anon will enter.

ANT. O thou aged man ;  
But who is he who on yon chariot, drawn  
By milk-white coursers, seated, guides the reins ?

ATT. The seer Amphiaraus, O royal maid,  
He bears the victims that with crimson tides  
Must drench the ground.

ANT. Encircled with a zone  
Of radiance, O thou daughter of the sun,  
Pale moon, who from his beams thy golden orb  
Illum'st, behold with what a steady thong  
And how discreetly he those coursers guides !  
But where is Capaneus, who proudly utters  
Against this city the most horrid threats ?

ATT. To these seven turrets each approach he marks,  
The walls from their proud summit to their base  
Measuring with eager eye.

ANT. Dread Nemesis,  
Ye too, O deep-toned thunderbolts of Jove,  
And livid flames of lightning ; yours, 'tis yours  
To blast such arrogance. Is this the man  
Who vowed that he the captive Theban dames,  
In slavery plunged, would to Mycene lead,  
To Lerna, where the god of ocean fixed  
His trident, whence its waters bear the name  
Of Amyône ? But, O child of Jove,  
Diana, venerable queen, who bind'st  
Thy streaming tresses with a golden caul,  
Never may I endure the loathsome yoke  
Of servitude.

ATT. The royal mansion enter,  
O daughter, and beneath its roof remain  
In your apartment, since you have indulged  
Your wish, and viewed those objects you desired.  
A tumult in the city now prevails :  
The women to the palace rush in crowds,  
For the whole female sex are prone to slander,



And soon as they some slight occasion find,  
 On which malignant rumours they can ground,  
 Add many more : for on such baneful themes  
 To them is it delightful to converse. [Exeunt.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

Borne from Phœnician shores I crossed the deep,  
 My tender years to Phœbus they consign  
     To sprinkle incense on his shrine,  
     And dwell beneath Parnassus' steep,  
     O'erspread with everlasting snow :  
     Our dashing oars were plied in haste  
 Through the Ionian wave, whose eddies flow  
 Round Sicily's inhospitable waste ;  
 Then vernal zephyrs breathed our sails around,  
 And Heaven's high-vaulted roof conveyed the murmuring  
     sound.

I. 2.

A chosen offering to the Delphic god,  
 I from my native city to this land,  
     Where aged Cadmus bore command,  
     Am come, obedient to the nod  
     Of those who from Agenor spring,  
     To the proud towers of Laius' race,  
 Our kindred governed by a kindred king.  
 Here stand I, like an image on its base,  
 Though destined to partake refined delights,  
 Bathe in Castalia's stream, and tend Apollo's rites.

III.

O mountain, from whose cloven height  
 There darts a double stream of light,  
 Oft on thy topmost ridge the Menades are seen,  
 And thou, each day distilling generous wine,  
 O plant of Bacchus, whose ripe clusters shine,  
     Blushing through the leaf's faint green ;  
 Ye caves, in which the Python lay,

And hills, from whence Apollo twanged his bow,  
 Around your heights o'erspread with snow,  
 'Midst my loved virgin comrades may I stray,  
 Each anxious fear expelling from my breast,  
 In the world's centre, that auspicious fane  
     The residence of Phœbus blest,  
 And bid adieu to Dirce's plain.

## II. 1.

But now before these walls doth Mars advance,  
 And brandish slaughter's flaming torch around;  
     May Thebes ne'er feel the threatened wound,  
     For to a friend his friend's mischance  
     Is grievous as his own : each ill  
     That lights upon these sevenfold towers  
 With equal woe Phœnicia's realm must fill :  
 For Thebes I mourn ; since, of one blood with ours  
 From Io's loves this nation dates its birth,  
 Those sorrows I partake which vex my kindred earth.

## II. 2.

Thick as a wintry cloud that phalanx stands,  
 Whose gleaming shields portend the bloody fight,  
     The god of war with stern delight  
     Shall to the siege those hostile bands  
     Lead on, and rouse the fiends to smite  
     The race of an incestuous bed :  
 Much, O Pélasgian Argos, much thy might,  
 And more the vengeance of the gods I dread ;  
 For, armed with justice, on his native land  
 Rushes that banished youth, the sceptre to demand.

## POLYNICES, CHORUS.

POL. They who were stationed to observe the gates  
 Unbarred them, and with courtesy received me  
 As I the fortress entered : hence I fear  
 Lest, now they in their wily toils have caught,  
 They should detain and slay me ; I with eyes  
 Most vigilant must therefore look around  
 To guard 'gainst treachery : but the sword which arms

This hand shall give me courage. Ho ! who's there ?  
 Doth a mere sound alarm me ? All things seem,  
 E'en to the bravest, dreadful, when they march  
 O'er hostile ground. I in my mother placed  
 Firm confidence, yet hardly can I trust  
 Her who on me prevailed t' accept the pledge  
 And hither come. But I have near at hand  
 A sure asylum, for the blazing altars  
 Are not remote, nor yet is yonder house  
 Without inhabitants. Be sheathed my sword.  
 Those courteous nymphs who at the portals stand  
 I'll question. O ye foreign damsels, say,  
 What was the country whence to Greece ye came ?

CHOR. Phœnicia is my native land, I there  
 Was nurtured : but Agenor's martial race  
 Me, the first fruit of their victorious arms,  
 A votive offering to Apollo sent,  
 But to the venerable prophetic domes,  
 And blazing shrines of Phœbus, when the son  
 Of Œdipus prepared to have conveyed me,  
 The Argives 'gainst this city led their host.  
 Now in return inform me who thou art  
 Who com'st to Thebes, o'er whose seven gates are reared  
 As many turrets.

POL.                   Œdipus, the son  
 Of Laius, was my sire : Menæceus' daughter  
 Jocasta brought me forth ; the name I bear  
 Is Polynices.

CHOR.           O, illustrious king,  
 Thou kinsman to Agenor's race, my lords  
 By whom I was sent hither, at thy feet,  
 I as the usage of my country bids  
 Prostrate myself. Thou to thy native land  
 After a tedious absence art returned.  
 But ho ! come forth, thou venerable dame,  
 Open the doors ! O mother of the chief,  
 Hear'st thou my voice ? Why yet dost thou delay  
 To cross the lofty palace, and with speed  
*In those fond arms thy dearest son enfold ?*

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, CHORUS.

JOC. Within the palace, O Phœnician nymphs,  
Hearing your voice, I with a tardy step,  
Trembling through age, creep hither. O my son,  
At length I, after many days, once more  
Behold that face. Fling fling those arms around  
The bosom of your mother ; those loved cheeks  
Let me embrace, and with your azure tresses,  
My neck o'ershadowing, mix my streaming hair.  
To these maternal arms you scarce return,  
Till hope and expectation both had failed.  
O how shall I accost you, how impart  
To my whole frame the transports of my soul,  
And all around me, wheresoe'er I turn,  
Bid pleasures past and distant years revive ?  
My son, you left this mansion of your sire  
A desert, by your haughty brother wronged  
And exiled from your country. By each friend  
How greatly hath your absence been bewailed !  
How greatly by all Thebes ! My hoary locks  
Hence did I sever from this aged head,  
Hence weeping utter many piteous notes,  
And, O my son, the tissued robes of white  
Which erst I wore, exchange for sable weeds,  
These loathed habiliments. Within the palace  
Your father, of his eyesight reft, bewails  
The disunited pillars of his house :  
Resolved to slay himself, he sometimes strives  
To rush on the drawn sword ; then searches round  
For the high beam to fix the gliding noose,  
Groaning forth imprecations 'gainst his son ;  
Thus, uttering with shrill tone his clamorous plaints,  
He lives, encompassed by perpetual night.  
But, ah ! my son, by wedlock's strictest bonds  
United, I am told that you enjoy  
A foreign consort, in a foreign realm,  
To vex your mother's soul and the stern ghost  
Of Laius ; on such ill-assorted nuptials



Curses attend. The Hymeneal torch  
 I kindled not to grace your spousal rites,  
 As custom hath ordained, and it behoves  
 A happy mother; nor his cooling stream  
 To fill the laver did Ismenos yield;  
 Nor on th' arrival of thy royal bride  
 Through Thebes were festive acclamations heard.  
 Perish the cause of this unnatural war,  
 Be it or sword, or discord, of your sire,  
 Or fate, whose horrors revel in the house  
 Of Œdipus: for these disasters sting  
 My soul with anguish.

CHOR. Great endearments rise  
 From pangs maternal, and all women love  
 Their progeny.

POL. Amidst my foes I come,  
 O mother, whether wisely or unwisely,  
 Great are my doubts: but all men are constrained  
 To love their country. He who argues aught  
 Against a truth so clear in empty words  
 Takes pleasure, while his heart confutes his tongue.  
 Yet with such panic terror was I seized,  
 Lest by some stratagem my brother slay me,  
 That, bearing a drawn falchion in my hand,  
 I cast my eyes around on every side  
 As I the city traversed: my sole trust  
 Is in the truce he swore to, and thy faith,  
 Which led me to this mansion of my sire:  
 Yet as I came full many a tear I shed,  
 After long absence, to behold the palace,  
 The sacred altars of the gods, that ring  
 Where wrestlers strive, scene of my youthful sports,  
 And Dirce's fountain. Hence unjustly driven  
 I in a foreign city dwell, and steep  
 These eyes in tears incessant. But to add  
 Grief to my griefs, thee with thy tresses shorn  
 I see, and in a sable vest arrayed.  
 Wretch that I am! How dreadful and how hard  
 To reconcile, is enmity 'twixt those

Of the same house, O mother ! But how fares  
My aged sire within, whose eyes are closed  
In total darkness ? how, my sisters twain ?  
Bewail they not their exiled brother's fate ?

JOC. Some god hath smitten the devoted house  
Of Œdipus. I first 'gainst Heaven's decrees  
Brought forth a son, and in an evil hour  
Wedded that son, to whom your owe your birth.  
But wherefore should I dwell upon these scenes  
Of horror ? It behoves us to bear up  
Under the woes inflicted by the gods.  
How shall I ask the questions which I wish ?—  
Fearing to wound your soul—yet to propose them  
Is my desire most urgent.

POL. Question me,  
Leave nought unsaid : for, O my dearest mother,  
Whatever is thy pleasure will to me  
Seem grateful.

JOC. With what most I wish to know  
Will I begin my questions. Is not exile  
A grievous ill ?

POL. Most grievous, and indeed  
Worse than in name.

JOC. How happens this ? Whence rises  
The misery of the banished man ?

POL. He's subject  
To one severe calamity—he wants  
Freedom of speech.

JOC. The wretch of whom you talk,  
Who utters not his thoughts, is but a slave.

POL. The follies of their rulers they must bear.

JOC. This were a piteous doom, to be constrained  
To imitate th' unwise.

POL. If gain ensue,  
We must submit, though nature's voice forbid.

JOC. Hopes, it is said, the hungry exile feed.

POL. With smiles they view him, but are slow to aid.

JOC. Doth not time prove their falsehood ?

POL. They

An influence equal to the Queen of Love ;  
They banish every sorrow from the breast.

JOC. But whence procured you food, ere you obtained  
A sustenance by wedlock ?

POL. For the day  
At times I had sufficient, but at times  
Was wholly destitute.

JOC. Your father's friends,  
And they who shared his hospitable board,  
Did they not aid you ?

POL. Be thou ever blest !  
For he who is unhappy hath no friend.

JOC. But did not your illustrious birth advance you  
To some exalted station ?

POL. A great curse  
Is poverty : this high descent with food  
Supplied me not.

JOC. To all mankind it seems  
Their native land's most dear.

POL. Words have not power  
T' express what love I for my country feel.

JOC. But why to Argos went you, what design  
Had you then formed ?

POL. Apollo to Adrastus  
Pronounced a certain oracle.

JOC. What mean you ?  
I cannot comprehend.

POL. That he in wedlock  
Should join his daughters to the boar and lion.

JOC. How did the names of these ferocious beasts  
Relate to you, my son ?

POL. I cannot tell.  
To this adventure was I called by fortune.

JOC. That goddess is discreet : but by what means  
Did you obtain your consort ?

POL. It was night  
When to Adrastus' vestibule I came.

JOC. To seek your lodging, like a banished vagrant ?

POL. E'en so : and there I met another exile.

JOC. Who was he ? Him most wretched too I deem.

POL. Tydeus, the son of Ceneus, I am told.

JOC. But wherefore did Adrastus to wild beasts  
Compare you ?

POL. From our fighting for a den.

JOC. Did then the son of Talaus thus expound  
The oracles ?

POL. And on us two bestowed  
His daughters.

JOC. But have these espousals proved  
Happy, or inauspicious ?

POL. I have found  
No reason yet to curse the day I wedded.

JOC. Yet how prevailed you on a foreign host  
Hither to follow you ?

POL. Adrastus sware  
To Tydeus and myself, his sons-in-law  
(Who now by strict affinity are joined),  
That both of us he in our native realms  
Will reinstate, but Polynices first.  
Unnumbered Argives and Mycene's chiefs  
Crowd to my banners, a lamented succour,  
But such as stern necessity demands,  
Affording : for my country I invade.  
Yet witness for me, O ye righteous gods,  
'Tis with reluctance that I wield the spear  
Against my dearest parents. But to thee,  
O mother, it belongs to end this strife,  
'To reconcile two brothers, and to cause  
My toils, and thine, and those of Thebes, to cease.  
Indulge me while I quote an ancient maxim :  
"Of human honours riches are the source,  
And rule with power supreme the tribes of men."  
In quest of wealth I hither come, and lead  
Unnumbered squadrons to the dubious field,  
For indigent nobility is scorned.

CHOR. But lo ! Eteocles himself repairs  
To th' appointed conference. In such terms  
As may restore peace 'twixt thy sons, be thine,  
Jocasta, the maternal task t' address them.

ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ETE. With your request, O mother, to comply,  
Hither I come : but what must now be done ?  
Let others speak before me. For the squadrons  
I round the walls have marshalled, and restrained  
The ardour of the city, till I hear  
What terms of peace you would propose, what views  
Within these walls induced you to receive  
My brother, by the public faith secured,  
Extorting my consent.

JOC. Yet pause awhile ;  
For haste is incompatible with justice :  
But slow deliberations oft effect  
Such schemes as wisdom dictates. Lay aside  
Those threatening looks, that vehemence of soul ;  
For thou behold'st not the terrific head  
Lopped from Medusa's shoulders, but behold'st  
Thy brother coming. Your benignant eyes,  
O Polynices, on your brother turn,  
For while you look upon that kindred face  
You will speak better, and his words receive  
With more advantage. Fain would I suggest  
One act of wholesome prudence to you both ;  
An angered friend, when with his friend he meets,  
Should at such interview attend to nought  
But those pacific schemes on which he came,  
Their ancient broils forgetting. 'Tis incumbent  
On you, O Polynices, to speak first,  
Because, complaining of great wrongs, you lead  
An Argive army hither. May some god  
Judge 'twixt my sons, and reconcile their strife !

POL. Plain are the words of truth, and justice needs  
No subtlety t' interpret, for it bears  
Enough to recommend it : but injustice,  
Devoid of all internal worth, requires  
Each specious art. My father's house, my interests,  
His also, I consulted : and the curse  
Which *Cedipus* had erst pronounced against us,

Anxious to shun, from these domains retired  
 A voluntary exile, and to him  
 Surrendered up the sceptre for one year,  
 That in my turn I might be king, nor come,  
 With enmity and slaughter in my train,  
 Those mischiefs which from discord must ensue  
 To act or suffer. He, who to these terms  
 Assented, and for sanctions of his oath  
 Invoked the gods, hath not accomplished aught  
 Of his engagements, but still keeps the throne,  
 And o'er my portion of our father's realm  
 Without a colleague reigns. I, on receiving  
 My rights, e'en now am ready from this land  
 To send the troops, and in my palace rule  
 For an appointed time, then yield again  
 The empire to my brother, nor lay waste  
 My country, nor the scaling-ladder plant  
 Against yon turrets : yet will I attempt  
 To do all this, if justice be denied me.  
 I call the gods to witness these assertions :  
 That though each solemn contract on my part  
 Hath been performed, I from my native land  
 By lawless force am driven. I have collected  
 No specious words, O mother, to adorn  
 Truths which with equal force must strike the wise  
 And the illiterate, if I judge aright.

CHOR. To me, although I in a Grecian realm  
 Have not been nurtured, thou appear'st to speak  
 With much discretion.

ETE. If, in their ideas  
 Of excellence and wisdom, all concurred,  
 No strife had e'er perplexed the human race.  
 But now, among the tribes of men, are fit,  
 And right, and fair equality mere names,  
 In real life no longer to be found.  
 To you, O mother, I without concealment  
 Will speak my sentiments : I would ascend  
 The starry paths whence bursts the orient sun,  
 And plunge beneath the central earth, to win



Empire, the greatest of th' immortal powers.  
I therefore will not yield up such a good  
To any other, but for my own use  
Retain it, O my mother : for of manhood  
Devoid is he who tamely bears the loss  
Of what he prizes most, and in its stead  
Accepts some mean exchange. Yet more, it shames me  
That he, who proudly comes with arms to lay  
Our country waste, his wishes should obtain.  
For this would be to Thebes a foul reproach,  
If, trembling at Mycene's spear, I gave  
To him my sceptre. Thus arrayed in mail  
He ought not to negotiate terms of peace.  
For all that by the sword our haughty foes  
Hope to exact might gentle words procure.  
If such his pleasure, he on other terms  
Shall be permitted in this land to dwell ;  
But never can I willingly forego  
That one great object, nor, while sovereign power  
Is yet within my reach, will I e'er stoop  
To be his vassal : rather come, ye flames,  
Ye falchions ; let the warrior steed be harnessed,  
With brazen chariots cover all the field,  
I never will surrender up my throne.  
Since, if we must o'erleap the narrow bounds  
Of justice, for an empire, to transgress  
Were glorious ; we in every point beside  
Are bound to act as virtue's rules enjoin.

CHOR. No ornaments of speech to evil deeds  
Are due, for justice hates such borrowed charms.

JOC. Believe me, O Eteocles my son,  
Old age is not by wretchedness alone  
Attended : more discreetly than rash youth  
Experience speaks. Why dost thou woo ambition,  
That most malignant goddess ? O forbear !  
For she's a foe to justice, and hath entered  
Full many a mansion, many a prosperous city,  
Nor left them till in ruin she involves  
*All those who harbour her : yet this is she*

On whom thou doat'st. 'Twere better, O my son,  
To cultivate equality, who joins  
Friends, cities, heroes in one steadfast league;  
For by the laws of nature, through the world  
Equality was 'stablished: but the wealthy  
Finds in the poorer man a constant foe;  
Hence bitter enmity derives its source.  
Equality, among the human race,  
Measures, and weights, and numbers hath ordained:  
Both the dark orb of night and radiant sun  
Their annual circuits equally perform;  
Each, free from envy, to the other yields  
Alternately; thus day and night afford  
Their services to man. Yet wilt not thou  
Be satisfied to keep an equal portion  
Of these domains, and to thy brother give  
His due. Where then is justice? Such respect  
As sober reason disapproves, why pay'st thou  
To empire, to oppression crowned with triumph?  
To be a public spectacle thou deem'st  
Were honourable. 'Tis but empty pride.  
When thou hast much already, why submit  
To toils unnumbered? What's superfluous wealth  
But a mere name? Sufficient to the wise  
Is competence: for man possesses nought  
Which he can call his own. Though for a time  
What bounty the indulgent gods bestow  
We manage, they resume it at their will:  
Unstable riches vanish in a day.  
Should I to thee th' alternative propose  
Either to reign, or save thy native land,  
Couldst thou reply that thou hadst rather reign?  
But if he conquer, and the Argive spears  
O'erpower the squadrons who from Cadmus spring,  
Thou wilt behold Thebes taken, wilt behold  
Our captive virgins ravished by the foe:  
That empire which thou seek'st will prove the bane  
Of thy loved country; yet thou still persist'st  
In mischievous ambition's wild career.



Thus far to thee. And now to you I speak,  
 O Polynices; favours most unwise  
 Are those Adrastus hath on you bestowed,  
 And with misjudging fury are you come  
 To spread dire havoc o'er your native land.  
 If you (which may the righteous gods avert !)  
 This city take, how will you rear the trophies  
 Of such a battle? How, when you have laid  
 Your country waste, th' initiatory rites  
 Perform, and slay the victims? On the banks  
 Of Inachus displayed, with what inscription  
 Adorn the spoils—"From blazing Thebes these shields  
 Hath Polynices won, and to the gods  
 Devoted"? Never, O my son, through Greece  
 May you obtain such glory. But if you  
 Are vanquished and Eteocles prevail,  
 To Argos, leaving the ensanguined field  
 Strewn with unnumbered corpses of the slain,  
 How can you flee for succour? 'Twill be said  
 By some malignant tongue: "A curst alliance  
 Is this which, O Adrastus, thou hast formed:  
 We to the nuptials of one virgin owe  
 Our ruin." You are hastening, O my son,  
 Into a twofold mischief: losing all  
 That you attempt, and causing your brave friends  
 To perish. O my sons, this wild excess  
 Of rage, with joint concurrence, lay aside.  
 By equal folly when two chiefs inspired  
 To battle rush, dire mischief must ensue.

CHOR. Avert these woes, and reconcile the sons  
 Of *(Edipus)*, ye gods.

ETE. No strife of words  
 Is ours, O mother; we but waste the time,  
 And all your care avails not. For no peace  
 Can we conclude on any other terms  
 Than those already named—that I, still wielding  
 The sceptre, shall be monarch of this land:  
 Then leave me to myself, and cease to urge  
 These tedious admonitions. As for thee,

O Polynices, from these walls depart,  
Or thou shalt die.

POL. By whom? Who can be found  
Invulnerable enough, with reeking sword  
To strike me dead, yet 'scape the self-same fate?

ETE. Beside thee, and not distant far he stands.  
Seest thou this arm?

POL. I see it: but wealth makes  
Its owners timid, and too fond of life.

ETE. Art thou come hither with a numerous host  
'Gainst him thou count'st a dastard in the field?

POL. A cautious general's better than a bold.

ETE. Thou on that compact, which preserves thy life,  
Too haughtily presum'st.

POL. Again I claim  
The sceptre and my portion of this realm.

ETE. Ill-founded is thy claim, for I will dwell  
In my own house.

POL. Retaining to yourself  
More than your share?

ETE. The words which I pronounce  
Are these: Depart thou from the Theban land.

POL. Ye altars of my loved paternal gods—

ETE. Which thou art come to plunder—

POL. Hear my voice.

ETE. What deity will hear thee, 'gainst thy country  
While thus thou wagest war?

POL. And ye abodes  
Of those two gods on milk-white coursers borne.

ETE. Who hate thee.

POL. From the mansions of my sire  
Am I expelled.

ETE. Because thou hither cam'st  
Those mansions to destroy.

POL. Thence was I driven  
With foul injustice. O ye powers divine!

ETE. Go to Mycene; there, and not at Thebes,  
Invoke the gods.

POL. You trample on the laws.

ETE. Yet am not I, like thee, my country's foe.

POL. Reft of my portion, while you drive me forth  
An exile.

ETE. Thee moreover will I slay.

POL. Hear'st thou what wrongs, my father, I endure?

ETE. Thy actions too have reached his ears.

POL. And you,

My mother.

ETE. Thou thy mother canst not name  
Without a profanation.

POL. O thou city!

ETE. To Argos haste, and there invoke the pool  
Of Lerna.

POL. I depart: forbear to grieve  
For me, O mother, but accept my praise.

ETE. From these domains avaunt!

POL. Before I go,  
Permit me to behold our sire.

ETE. Thou shalt not  
Obtain this boon.

POL. My virgin sisters then.

ETE. Them, too, thou ne'er shalt see.

POL. Alas! dear sisters!

ETE. Why nam'st thou those to whom thou art most  
hateful?

POL. Joy to my mother!

JOC. Have I any cause  
For joy, my son?

POL. No longer am I yours.

JOC. Full many and most grievous are my woes.

POL. Because he wrongs me.

ETE. Equal are the wrongs  
I suffer.

POL. Where will you your station take  
Before yon turrets?

ETE. For what purpose ask  
This question?

POL. I in battle am resolved  
To meet and slay you.

ETE. The same wish now fires  
My inmost soul.

JOC. Alas ! my sons, what mean ye ?

ETE. The fact itself must show.

JOC. Will ye not shun  
The curses of your sire ?

ETE. Perdition seize  
On our whole house ! Soon shall my sword, embrued  
With gore, no longer in its scabbard rest.

[Exit] JOCASTA.

POL. Thou soil which nurtured me, and every god,  
Bear witness, that with insults and with wrongs  
O'erwhelmed I from my country, like a slave,  
Not like the son of Œdipus, am driven.

Whate'er thou suffer, O thou city, blame,  
Not me, but him : for I was loth t' invade  
This land, and with reluctance now depart.  
Thou too, O Phœbus, mighty king, who guard'st  
These streets, ye palaces, my youthful comrades,  
Farewell ! and, O ye statues of the gods,  
Drenched with the blood of victims !—for I know not  
Whether I ever shall accost you more.

But hope yet sleeps not, and in her I place  
My trust, that with Heaven's aid I shall enjoy  
The Theban realm, when I have slain this boaster.

[Exit] POLYNICES.

ETE. Leave these domains : a forethought by the gods  
Inspired, my father prompted, when on thee  
The name of Polynices, to denote  
Abundance of contention, he bestowed.

[Exit] ETEOCLES.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Erst to this land the Tyrian Cadmus came,  
When at his feet a heifer lay,  
Who in the meads unyoked was wont to stray,  
Fulfilling Heaven's response, well known to fame,  
And marked the spot where he should dwell:

The oracle announced this fruitful ground  
 For his abode, where, from her limpid well,  
 Fair Dirce spreads a cooling stream around,  
 And on her banks are vernal blossoms found :

Compressed by amorous Jove  
 Here Semele the ruddy Bromius bore,  
 Whom ivy with luxuriant tendrils strove  
 In infancy to mantle o'er  
 And round his happy brows to spread.  
 Hence, in bacchanalian dance,  
 With light and wanton tread  
 The Theban nymphs advance,  
 And matrons all their cares resign,  
 Gay votaries to the god of wine.

## II.

Mars at the fount its ruthless guardian placed,  
 On scaly folds a dragon rode,  
 Wild glared his eyes, in vain the waters flowed,  
 Nor dared the thirsting passenger to taste ;  
 Advancing with undaunted tread  
 To draw libations for the powers divine,  
 A ponderous stone full on the monster's head  
 Cadmus discharged, then seized and pierced his chine  
 With frequent wounds ; so Pallas did enjoin :

This done, the teeth he sowed,  
 And instantly, dire spectacle, a train,  
 All clad in mail, on earth's torn surface glowed ;  
 Soon was each hardy warrior slain,  
 And to the soil which gave him birth  
 Joined once more : a crimson flood  
 Moistened the lap of earth ;  
 By parching winds their blood  
 Was visited, and still remain  
 Its marks on the discoloured plain.

## III.

To thee, O Epaphus, the child of Jove,  
 Sprung from our grandame Io's love,  
 I cried in a barbaric strain ;

O visit, visit this once favoured plain  
 Which thy descendants call their own.  
 Two goddesses by countless votaries known,  
 Proserpina, dread queen, who from our birth  
 Conducts us to the tomb, with Ceres the benign,  
 E'en she whose foodful shrine  
 Is thronged by every denizen of earth,  
 From earliest days this realm possessed ;  
 With lambent glories on their front displayed,  
 O send them to its aid ;  
 Nought can withstand a god's request.

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETE. [*to one of his ATTENDANTS.*] Go thou, and hither  
 bring Menæceus' son,  
 Creon, the noble brother of Jocasta,  
 My mother ; tell him, on my own affairs,  
 And on the public interests of the state,  
 With him I would consult, ere host opposed  
 To host in battle meet and launch the spear.  
 But lo ! he is at hand to spare thy feet  
 The toil of this their errand : I behold him  
 Approach the palace.

CREON, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

CRE. I to every gate  
 And every sentinel, my royal lord,  
 Have gone in quest of you.

ETE. Thee, too, I longed,  
 O Creon, to behold : for I have found  
 Treaties for peace all fruitless since I spoke  
 With Polynices.

CRE. He, I hear, looks down  
 With scorn on Thebes, trusting in his ally  
 Adrastus, and that numerous Argive host.  
 But we to the decision of the gods  
 Must now refer. Most urgent are th' affairs  
 Of which I come to tell.

ETE. What means my friend ?  
 Thy words I comprehend not.



CRE. From the camp  
Of Argos a deserter came.

ETE. To bring  
Some recent tidings of what passes there?

CRE. Their host, he says, arrayed in glittering mail,  
Will instantly besiege the Theban towers.

ETE. The valiant race of Cadmus from these gates  
Must sally forth, to guard their native land.

CRE. What mean you? Sees not your impetuous youth  
Our strength in a false light?

ETE. Without the trenches,  
To show that we are ready for the combat.

CRE. Few are the Theban squadrons, but the number  
Of theirs is great.

ETE. In words I know them brave.

CRE. The fame of Argos through all Greece resounds.

ETE. Be of good cheer; I with their corpses soon  
These fields will cover.

CRE. With your wishes mine  
Concur: but I foresee that such emprise  
Abounds with heaviest dangers.

ETE. Be assured  
I will not coop my host within the walls.

CRE. On prudent counsels our success depends.

ETE. Wouldst thou persuade me therefore to attempt  
Some other method?

CRE. Ere you risk our fate  
On one decisive battle, have recourse  
To all expedients.

ETE. What if I rush forth  
From ambush, and encounter them by night?

CRE. Could you return, if worsted, and take shelter  
Within these walls?

ETE. Night to both hosts affords  
The same impediments; but they fare best  
Who give th' assault.

CRE. 'Tis terrible to rush  
On danger 'midst the thickest clouds of darkness.

ETE. Shall I then launch the javelin, while they sit  
Around the genial board?

CRE. This might alarm them :  
Our business is to conquer.

ETE. Dirce's channel,  
Which they must cross in their retreat, is deep.

CRE. All schemes you can propose are less expedient  
Than if you with a prudent caution act.

ETE. But what if we with cavalry attack  
The Argive camp ?

CRE. On every side the host  
With chariots is secured.

ETE. What then remains  
For me to do ? Must I surrender up  
This city to our foes ?

CRE. Not thus ; exert  
Your wisdom, and deliberate.

ETE. What precaution,  
Think'st thou, were most discreet ?

CRE. I am informed  
They have seven champions.

ETE. What's the task assigned  
For them t' effect ? Their strength can be but small.

CRE. To head as many bands, and storm each gate.

ETE. How then shall we proceed ? For I disdain  
To sit inactive.

CRE. On your part select  
Seven warriors who the portals may defend.

ETE. O'er squadrons to preside, or take their stand  
As single combatants ?

CRE. To lead seven squadrons,  
Choosing the bravest.

ETE. Well I understand  
Thy purpose ; to prevent the foe from scaling  
The ramparts.

CRE. Comrades of experience add ;  
For one man sees not all.

ETE. Shall I to valour  
Or wisdom give the preference

CRE. Join them both :  
For one without the other is a thing  
Of no account.



ETE.                   It shall be done. I'll march  
Into the city, place at every gate  
A chief, as thou hast counselled, and the troops  
Distribute so that we on equal terms  
May with the foe engage. It would be tedious  
The name of every warrior to recount,  
Just at this moment, when beneath our walls  
The enemy is posted. But with speed  
I go, that I in action may not prove  
A loiterer. May it be my lot to meet  
My brother hand to hand, that with this spear  
I 'midst the lines of battle may transfix  
And kill that spoiler, who is come to lay  
My country waste. I to thy care entrust  
The nuptials of Antigone, my sister,  
And thy son Hæmon, if it be my fate  
To perish in the combat, and enforce  
Our former contract with my dying breath.  
Thou art Jocasta's brother: of what use  
Are many words? My mother in such rank  
Maintain as suits thy honour and the love  
Thou bear'st me. As for my unhappy sire,  
To his own folly are his sufferings due,  
Bereft of eyesight; him I cannot praise,  
For by his curses would he slay us both.  
One thing have we omitted—of the seer  
Tiresias to inquire if he have aught  
Of Heaven's obscure responses to disclose.  
Thy son, Menæceus from his grandsire named,  
To fetch the prophet hither will I send,  
O Creon, for he gladly will converse  
With thee: but I so scornfully have treated,  
E'en in his presence, the whole soothsayer's art,  
That he abhors me. But I, on the city  
And thee, O Creon, this injunction lay:  
If I prove stronger, suffer not the corpse  
Of Polynices in this Theban realm  
To be interred: let death be the reward  
Of him who scatters dust o'er his remains,

Although he be the dearest of my friends.  
 Thus far to thee—but to my followers this  
 I add : bring forth my shield, my helm, my greaves,  
 And radiant mail, that by victorious justice  
 Accompanied, I instantly may rush  
 Amidst the fray which waits me. But to prudence,  
 Who best of all th' immortal powers protects  
 The interests of her votaries, let us pray  
 That she this city would from ruin save.

[Exit ETEOCLES.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

How long, stern Mars, shall scenes of death inspire  
 Aversion to the feasts gay Bacchus holds ?  
 Why join'st thou not the beauteous virgin choir  
 Whose heaving bosoms love's first warmth unfolds,  
 Thy hair's loose ringlets waving o'er thy face,  
 Pleased on some amorous theme the lute t' employ,  
 Dear to the Graces, dear to social joy ?  
 But thou, a foe to the devoted race  
 Of Thebé, lead'st these Argives to their fields,  
 Forming dire preludes for a tragic dance ;  
 Nor with the god whose hand the thyrsus wields,  
 In dappled skins of hinds dost thou advance ;  
 Exulting in the thong and harnessed steeds,  
 Thou driv'st thy chariot o'er Ismenos' meads,  
 And 'gainst th' invaders, in each Theban breast  
 Infusing equal rancour, prompt'st that band,  
 Seed of the dragon's teeth, to take their stand ;  
 These rush to guard the walls, and those t' invest.  
 Inhuman goddess, Discord, to the kings  
 Of Labdacus' house a train of misery brings.

II.

With sacred foliage ever clad, ye groves  
 Of famed Cithæron, whose steep cliffs abound  
 With sylvan game, thou mount where Dian loves  
 To urge through drifted snows the rapid hound,

Thou ought'st not to have nourished in thy shade  
 Jocasta's son ; then better had he died  
 When, cast forth from the palace, on thy side  
 In glittering vest the royal child was laid :  
 Nor ought the Sphynx, the curse of these domains,  
 That subtle virgin, to have winged her way  
 From thy proud heights with inauspicious strains ;  
 Armed with four talons, clenched to rend her prey,  
 These walls approaching, high into the air  
 The progeny of Cadmus did she bear,  
 By Pluto sent from hell, 'gainst Thebes she came.  
 New woes the sons of Œdipus await,  
 Again this city feels the scourge of fate,  
 For virtue springs not from the couch of shame ;  
 Fruits of th' incestuous womb, their sire's disgrace,  
 Are these devoted youths, accurst and spurious race.

## III.

Erst thy teeming soil gave birth  
 (As in barbaric accents was made known  
 To us by the loud voice of fame),  
 O Thebes, to that illustrious brood of earth,  
 Sprung from the teeth of that slain dragon sown,  
 Thy realm their prowess did adorn.  
 In honour of Harmonia's bridal morn,  
 To this favoured region came  
 All the celestial choir,  
 What time the turrets, which this grateful land  
 Impregnable by human force esteems,  
 Reared by the harp, and not the artist's hand,  
 Obedient to Amphion's lyre,  
 Arose amidst the fruitful meads  
 Where gentle Dirce leads  
 Her current, and Ismenos' waters yield  
 Abundant verdure to the field  
 Encompassed by their streams.  
 She, whom a heifer's hornéd front disguised,  
 Io, was mother to the Theban kings :  
*Successively*, each bliss by mortals prized,



Hath to this city given renown,  
And hither still fair victory brings  
The noblest meed of war, the laurel's deathless crown.

TIRESIAS, MENÆCEUS, CREON, CHORUS.

TIR. [*to his daughter* MANTO.] Lead on ; for thou,  
my daughter, to the feet  
Of thy blind father, prov'st an eye as sure  
As to the mariners the polar star.  
Place me where I on level ground may tread,  
And go before, lest we both fall : thy sire  
Is feeble. In thy virgin hand preserve  
Those oracles which I in former days  
Received, when from the feathered race I drew  
My auguries, and in the sacred chair  
Of prophecy was seated. Say, thou youth  
Menæceus, son of Creon, through the city  
How far must I proceed before I reach  
Thy father, for my knees can scarce support me,  
And though full oft I raise these aching feet,  
I seem to gain no ground.

CRE. Be of good cheer,  
Tiresias, for with well-directed step  
Already have you reached your friend. My son,  
Support him : for the chariot, and the foot  
Of an infirm old man, is wont to need  
The kind assistance of some guiding hand.

TIR. No matter. I am here. Why with such haste,  
O Creon, call'st thou me ?

CRE. I have not yet  
Forgotten ; but till your exhausted strength  
Can be recovered after the fatigue  
Of your long march, take breath.

TIR. With wearied step  
I yesterday came hither from the realm  
Of Athens, for there also was a war  
Against Eumolpus, o'er whose troops I caused  
The dauntless race of Cecrops to prevail :  
Hence I possess the golden crown thou seest,

As a first fruit selected from the spoils  
Of foes discomfited.

CRE. That crown I deem  
An omen of success. You know the storm  
Which threatens us from yonder Argive host  
And what a mighty conflict now impends  
O'er the inhabitants of Thebes. Our king  
Eteocles, in brazen arms arrayed,  
To face Mycene's squadrons is gone forth,  
But hath with me a strict injunction left,  
To learn of you what can with most effect  
By us be done the city to preserve.

TIR. This mouth, I on Eteocles' account  
Still closing, would for ever have suppressed  
Heaven's dread response, but will to thee unfold it  
Since 'tis thy wish to hear. This land, O Creon,  
Hath been diseased since Laius 'gainst the will  
Of Heaven became a father, and begot  
The wretched *Ædipus*, his mother's husband,  
Whose eyes, torn out by his own hand, the gods  
Wisely ordained should to all Greece afford  
A dread example; which, in striving long  
To cover from the knowledge of the world,  
His sons, as if they thought to have escaped  
Heaven's eye, with a presumptuous folly sinned:  
For to their father yielding no respect,  
Nor loosing him from prison, they embittered  
The anguish of a miserable man:  
At once afflicted by disease and shame,  
Those horrid execrations he poured forth  
Against them both: "What have I left undone,  
Or what unsaid, though all my zeal but served  
To make me hated by th' unnatural sons  
Of *Ædipus*?" But by each other's hand,  
Them soon shall death o'ertake, O Creon; heaps  
On heaps of carnage cover all the plain,  
And Argive weapons mingling with the shafts  
Of Cadmus' race, through the whole Theban land  
Cause bitter plaints. Thou too, O wretched city,

Shalt be destroyed, unless my counsels meet  
 With one who will obey them. What were most  
 To be desired were this : that none who spring  
 From Œdipus should here reside, or hold  
 The sceptre of this land, for they, impelled  
 By the malignant demons, will o'erthrow  
 The city. But, since evil thus prevails  
 O'er good, one other method yet remains  
 To save us. But unsafe were it for me  
 Such truths to utter, and, on bitter terms,  
 Must they whom Fate selects their country heal.  
 I go : farewell ! I, as a private man,  
 Shall suffer, if necessity ordain,  
 With multitudes, the evils which impend :  
 For how can I escape the general doom ?

CRE. Here tarry, O my venerable friend.

TIR. Detain me not.

CRE. Stay ; wherefore would you fly ?

TIR. It is thy fortune which from thee departs,  
 And not Tiresias.

CRE. By what means, inform me,  
 Can Thebes with its inhabitants be saved ?

TIR. Though such thy wish at present, thou ere long  
 Wilt change thy purpose.

CRE. How can I be loth  
 To save my country ?

TIR. Art thou anxious then  
 To hear the truth ?

CRE. What ought I to pursue  
 With greater zeal ?

TIR. Thou instantly shall hear  
 The oracles Heaven sends me to unfold :  
 But first assure me where Menæceus is,  
 Who led me hither.

CRE. At your side he stands.

TIR. Far hence let him retire, while I disclose  
 To thee the awful mandate of the gods.

CRE. My son with th' utmost strictness will observe  
 The silence you enjoin.

TIR. Is it thy will  
That in his présence I to thee should speak?

CRE. Of aught that could preserve his native land  
He with delight would hear.

TIR. Then, to the means  
Which through my oracles are pointed out,  
Yield due attention ; for by acting thus  
Ye shall preserve this city, where the race  
Of Cadmus dwell ; thou, in thy country's cause,  
Thy son Menæceus art ordained to slay :  
Since thou on me importunately call'st  
The dread behest of fortune to unfold.

CRE. What say you ? How unwelcome are these words,  
O aged man !

TIR. I only speak of things  
Just as they are ; and add, thou must perform  
Th' iniunction.

CRE. How much evil have you uttered  
In one short moment !

TIR. Though to thee unwelcome,  
Yet to thy country fame and health,

CRE. Your words  
I hear not, nor your purpose comprehend :  
The city I abandon to its fate.

TIR. His purpose he retracts, and is no longer  
The man he was.

CRE. Depart in peace ; I need not  
Your oracles.

TIR. Hath truth then lost its merit,  
Because thou art unhappy ?

CRE. By those knees,  
You I implore, and by those hoary locks.

TIR. Why sue to me ? The ills 'gainst which thou pray'st  
Are not to be avoided.

CRE. Peace ! Divulge not  
In Thebes these tidings.

TIR. Dost thou bid me act  
Unjustly ? Them I never will suppress.

CRE. What is your purpose, to destroy my son ?



TIR. Let others see to that : I only speak  
As Heaven ordains.

CRE. But whence was such a curse  
On me and on my progeny derived ?

TIR. Well hast thou asked this question, and a field  
For our debate laid open. In yon den,  
Where erst the guard of Dirce's fountain lay,  
That earth-born dragon, must the youth pour forth  
His blood for a libation to the ground,  
And expiate by his death the ancient hate  
To Cadmus borne by Mars, who thus avenges  
The progeny of earth, the dragon, slain :  
This done, the god of battles will become  
Your champion ; and when earth shall, in the stead  
Of her lost fruit the dragon, have received  
The fruit of that heroic race who sprung  
From its own teeth, and human blood for blood,  
Propitious shall ye find the teeming soil,  
Which erst, instead of wheat, produced a crop  
Of radiant helms. Die then some victim must  
Who from the jaws of that slain dragon sprung :  
But thou alone in Thebes remain'st who thence  
Deriv'st thy birth unmixed, both by thy sire  
And by the female line ; thence, too, descend  
Thy generous sons : but Hæmon must not bleed,  
Because he is espoused, nor in a state  
Of pure celibacy doth still remain,  
For he possesses an affianced bride,  
Although he be a stranger to her bed.  
But, for the city, if this tender youth  
Shall as a chosen victim be devoted,  
He by his death will save his native land,  
Will cause Adrastus and his Argive host  
With anguish to return, before their eyes  
Placing grim death, and add renown to Thebes.  
From these two fortunes make thy choice of one,  
Whether thy son or city thou wilt save.  
Thou hast heard all I had to say in answer  
To thy inquiries. Daughter, lead me home.



Unwise is he who practises the art  
Of divination ; for if he announce  
Evils to come, he is abhorred by those  
Who hear him ; but, through pity, if he utter  
Untruths that please, he sins against the gods.  
Phœbus alone, who cannot fear the hate  
Of man, his own responses should pronounce.

[Exit TIRESIAS.]

CHOR. What means this silence ? Wherefore hast thou  
closed

Thy mouth, O Creon ? But I too am smitten  
With equal terror.

CRE. How can a reply  
Be made to such proposal ? What I mean  
To say is evident. To such a pitch  
Of woe may I ne'er come as to resign  
My son to bleed for Thebes ! In all mankind  
The love they bear their children is as strong  
As that of life ; nor is there any father  
Who for a victim will yield up his son.  
May no man praise me on such terms as slaying  
Those I begot ! I stand prepared to die,  
For I am ripe in years, and would for Thebes  
Make due atonement with my streaming gore.  
But, O my son, ere the whole city know,  
Regardless of that frantic prophet's voice,  
Fly from this land, fly with your utmost speed ;  
He will proclaim the oracle to those  
Who wield the sceptre, or lead forth our troops  
To battle, visiting each chieftain stationed  
At the seven gates : if haply we with him  
Can be beforehand, you may yet be saved ;  
But if you loiter, we are both undone.  
And you must die.

MEN. But whither, to what city,  
What hospitable stranger speed my flight ?

CRE. As far as possible from these domains.

MEN. You ought to name a place for my retreat,  
And I must execute what you command.

CRE. Passing through Delphi—

MEN.

Whither, O my sire,

Must I proceed?

CRE.

To the Ætolian land.

MEN. But whither thence shall I direct my course?

CRE. Next to Thesprotia.

MEN.

Where Dodona rears

Her hallowed grove.

CRE.

Full well you comprehend

My meaning.

MEN.

There what safeguard shall I find?

CRE. Its tutelary god your steps will guide.

MEN. But how shall I with treasures be supplied?

CRE. To you will I convey abundant gold.

MEN. Discreetly have you spoken, O my sire.

CRE. Now leave me.

MEN.

To your sister I would go—

I mean Jocasta, who first nurtured me

In infancy, when of my mother reft

An orphan I became; one fond adieu

To her I fain would bid, and of my life

Then take due care.

CRE.

But go, or you will frustrate

All I can do to save you.

[Exit CREON.]

MEN.

With what art,

O virgins, have I soothed my father's fears,

By specious words (my promise to accomplish)

Deceiving him who sends me hence, to rob

The city of those fortunes which await her,

And brand me with a coward's hateful name.

In an old man such weakness claims excuse;

But I should sin beyond all hopes of pardon.

If I betrayed the land which gave me birth.

I go, to save this city; be assured,

Such are the terms on which I yield up life,

Content to perish in my country's cause.

If they whom Heaven's oracular response

Leaves at full liberty, by no decrees

Of the resistless destinies impelled,  
 Maintain their ground in battle, nothing loth  
 To bleed, the champions of their native land,  
 Before yon turrents, base were it in me,  
 If proving faithless to my sire, my brother,  
 And country, like a dastard, I should speed  
 My flight from these domains; where'er I live,  
 Shame would o'ertake me. From the starry pole  
 May Jove forefend, and Mars, in human gore  
 Exulting, who the sceptre of this realm  
 Erst gave to kings, earth's progeny, the seed  
 Of that slain dragon's teeth. But I will go,  
 Ascend the topmost pinnacles, and piercing  
 My breast, where they o'erhang the dragon's cave,  
 The very spot the seer described, redeem  
 My country from its foes. I have pronounced  
 Th' irrevocable word. But, by my death,  
 On Thebes no sordid present to bestow,  
 I haste, and from these mischiefs will set free  
 The groaning land. Would every man exert  
 To their full stretch his talents to promote  
 The public interest, every state, exposed  
 To fewer ills, hereafter might be blest.

[Exit MENÆCEUS.]

CHORUS

ODE.

I.

O winged fiend, who from the earth  
 And an infernal viper drew'st thy birth,  
 Thou cam'st, thou cam'st, to bear away,  
 Amidst incessant groans, thy prey,  
     And harass Cadmus' race,  
 Thy frantic pinions did resound,  
 Thy fangs impressed the ghastly wound,  
 Thou ruthless monster with a virgin's face :  
 What youths from Dirce's fount were borne aloof,  
 While thou didst utter thy discordant song,  
     The furies haunted every roof,

And o'er these walls sat slaughter brooding long.  
 Sure from some god whose breast no mercy knew  
 Their source impure these horrors drew.  
 From house to house the cries  
 Of matrons did resound,  
 And wailing maidens rent the skies  
 With frequent shrieks loud as the thunder's burst,  
 Oft as the Sphinx accurst,  
 Some youth, whom in the Theban streets she found,  
 Bore high in air ; all gazed in wild affright,  
 Till she vanished from their sight.

## II.

At length the Pythian god's command  
 Brought Œdipus to this ill-fated land ;  
 Each heart did then with transport glow,  
 Though now his name renew their woe :  
 By angry Heaven beguiled,  
 When he th' enigma had explained,  
 His mother for a bride he gained ;  
 With incest hence the city was defiled.  
 Fresh murders soon his curses will inspire,  
 Urging his sons to an unnatural strife.  
 We that heroic youth admire  
 Who in his country's cause resigns his life,  
 He, though his father Creon wail his fate,  
 With triumph in the fell debate,  
 Will crown these sevenfold towers.  
 Of Heaven I ask no more  
 Than that such children may be ours :  
 Thy aid, O Pallas, in th' adventurous deed  
 Caused Cadmus to succeed,  
 And slay the dragon, whose envenomed gore  
 Was sprinkled on these rocks ; by Heaven's command  
 Hence some pest still haunts the land.

## MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Who at the portals of the regal dome  
 Is stationed ? Open, bring Jocasta forth



From her apartment. Ho! advance at length,  
And listen to my voice, illustrious wife  
Of Œdipus. No longer grieve, nor shed  
The piteous tear.

JOCASTA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

JOC. Come you, my friend, to bring  
Sad tidings of Eteocles the slain,  
Beside whose shield you ever stood to guard  
The warrior from the javelins of the foe?  
With what important message are you charged?  
Is my son dead, or lives he? Tell me all.

MES. He lives, that fear be banished.

JOC. Are our walls  
By their seven towers secured?

MES. They still remain  
Unshaken, and the city is not sacked.

JOC. Have they withstood the perilous assault  
From th' Argive combatants?

MES. The fate of battle  
Is just decided: the intrepid race  
Of Cadmus o'er Mycene's host prevailed.

JOC. Yet one thing more; I by th' immortal powers  
Conjure you, tell me whether you know aught  
Of Polynices, for I wish to learn  
If he yet live.

MES. At present both thy sons  
Are living.

JOC. Bliss attend you: but inform me  
How ye the troops of Argos from the gates,  
Beleaguered in the turrets, could repel?  
That to my home with speed I may return,  
The blind and aged Œdipus to soothe  
With the glad tidings that this city's saved.

MES. Since Creon's son, who for his country died,  
Mounting the topmost pinnacles, transpierced  
His bosom with the falchion, and became  
The generous saviour of his native land:  
Eteocles distributed seven cohorts

At the seven gates, and to each band assigned  
Its leader, by their vigilance to check  
The furious onset of the Argive host :  
He stationed a reserve of horse to succour  
The horse, and infantry with bucklers armed  
Behind the infantry, that where the walls  
Were with the greatest violence assailed  
Fresh strength might be at hand. As on our turrets  
We stood exalted, and o'erlooked the plain,  
The Argive host we saw, with silver shields  
Conspicuous, from Teumessus' mount descend :  
Over their trenches in their rapid march  
Soon vaulting, to the city they drew near,  
While pæans, mingled with the trumpet's sound,  
At the same instant through their ranks were heard,  
And on the Theban walls. His squadron, first,  
By their raised targets screened, which cast around  
A horrid shade, to the Nēitian gate  
Parthenopæus led, the daring son  
Of Atalanta ; on his central shield,  
His mother's trophy, the Ætolian boar,  
Pierced by that huntress with unerring shaft,  
The chief displayed. Amphiareus the seer  
Marched to the gates of Prætus, on his car  
Conveying victims : no unseemly pride  
In his armorial bearings was expressed,  
But on his modest buckler there appeared  
A vacant field. At the Ogygian portals  
The fierce Hippomedon maintained his stand.  
By this achievement was his orbéd targe  
Distinguished : Argus, with unnumbered eyes,  
A part of which, awakening fresh from sleep,  
Oped with the rising stars, meantime the rest  
He with the setting constellations closed ;  
As more distinctly, when the chief was slain,  
Might be discerned. But Tydeus next his post  
Before the Homoleæan gate maintained :  
With a huge lion's bristly hide his shield  
Was covered, in his better hand a torch

He, like Prometheus of the Titans' race,  
Brandished to fire the city. To the gate  
From Dirce's fountain named his marshalled troops  
Thy son the furious Polynices led ;  
The rapid mares of Potnia (the device  
Portrayed upon his target) seemed to leap  
With panic terrors smitten, and, grown frantic,  
All crowded in a circle to the rim.  
Equal in courage to the God of War,  
Next with his cohort to Electra's gate  
Rushed Capaneus : the ensign wrought in steel  
Upon his buckler was an earth-born giant,  
Whose shoulders carried a whole city torn  
With levers from its basis, to denote  
The menaced fate of Thebes. Adrastus' self  
At the seventh gate appeared ; on his left arm  
The Hydra with a hundred snakes begirt,  
Which filled the convex surface of his shield,  
That badge of Argive pride, the warrior bore.  
From Thebes, surrounded by its lofty walls,  
The serpents opening their voracious jaws  
Conveyed the sons of Cadmus. Each device  
I could observe securely, as I passed  
Betwixt the leaders of the adverse hosts,  
Distinguished by the pledge of truce. At first  
We at a distance fought with bows and shafts,  
And slings and stones ; but when our troops obtained  
An easy conquest in this missile war,  
Tydeus, and Polynices, thy brave son,  
Both cried at the same instant, " O ye race  
Of Danaus, ere our squadrons are dispersed  
By weapons from yon lofty turrets hurled,  
Why on the portals scruple ye to make  
One resolute assault with all our strength,  
The light-armed troops, our horse, and brazen cars ?"  
Soon as they heard their leader's cheering voice,  
None loitered, but full many a valiant Argive  
Was through the brain transpierced, while from the walls,  
*Like skilful divers, our expiring friends*



Oft threw themselves ; the thirsty ground with streams  
Of gore they drenched. Fierce Atalanta's son,  
Not Argos, but Arcadia gave him birth,  
Rushed like a whirlwind to the gates, and called  
For flaming brands and axes to destroy ;  
But Periclimenus, who from the god  
Of ocean sprung, soon quelled his frantic rage :  
Torn from the battlement, a stone, whose mass  
Had filled a chariot, on his head he threw,  
The stripling's auburn hair and crashing skull  
It severed, and those rosy cheeks defiled  
With gushing blood ; to the maternal arms  
Of her who twangs the unerring bow, the nymph  
Of Mænalon, he never shall return.  
But when thy son Eteocles surveyed  
Our triumphs at this gate, the rest with speed  
He visited ; I followed, and beheld  
Tydeus attended by a phalanx armed  
With bucklers hurling their Ætolian spears  
Into the loftiest towers, with such success  
That they constrained our fugitives to quit  
Their station on the ramparts ; but thy son  
Rallied them like a hunter, and collected  
Each warrior to resume his post ; their fears  
Dispelled, we hastened to another gate.  
But in what terms shall I describe the madness  
Of Capaneus ? He with a ladder came,  
And boasted that not e'en the lightning launched  
By Jove's own hand should hinder him from scaling  
The towers to sack the city. Thus he spoke ;  
And 'midst a storm of stones, from step to step  
Ascending, still sufficient shelter found  
Beneath the huge circumference of his shield ;  
But as he reached the summit of the wall  
Jove smote him with a thunderbolt, earth gave  
A sound so loud that all were seized with terror ;  
As from a sling his scattered limbs were thrown,  
His blasted tresses mounted to the skies,  
On earth his blood was sprinkled, but his hands

And feet were, like Ixion on the wheel,  
 Whirled with incessant motion, till at length  
 Down to the ground he fell a smouldering corse.  
 Soon as Adrastus saw Jove warred against him,  
 He with his Argive host in swift retreat  
 Again the trenches crossed: but when our troops  
 Marked the auspicious sign vouchsafed by Jove,  
 They from the gates rushed forth with brazen cars,  
 With cavalry in ponderous arms arrayed,  
 And 'midst the Argive squadrons hurled their spears:  
 Each ill concurred to overwhelm the foe,  
 Death raged amongst them, from their chariots thrown  
 They perished, wheels flew off, 'gainst axle crashed  
 Axle, and corses were on corses heaped.  
 The Theban turrets we this day have saved  
 From ruin, but to the immortal powers,  
 And them alone, belongs it to decide  
 Whether auspicious fortune on this land  
 Shall smile hereafter.

CHOR. In th' embattled field  
 'Tis glorious to prevail: but were the gods  
 More favourably disposed, I should enjoy  
 A greater share of bliss.

JOC. The gods and fortune  
 Have amply done their part: for both my sons  
 Are living, and the city hath escaped:  
 Unhappy Creon only seems to reap  
 The bitter fruits of my accursed nuptials  
 With Œdipus, for he hath lost his son,  
 And such event, though fortunate for Thebes,  
 To him is grievous. In your tale proceed.  
 Say on; what farther have my sons resolved?

MES. The sequel wave; for all with thee thus far  
 Goes prosperously.

JOC. These words but serve to raise  
 Suspicion: nothing must be left untold.

MES. What wouldst thou more than that thy sons are safe?

JOC. But whether my good fortune will prove lasting  
*I wish to know.*

MES.                   Release me : for thy son  
Is left without his shield-bearer.

Joc.   Some ill  
In mystic darkness wrapt you strive to hide.

MES. I to these welcome tidings cannot add  
Such as would make thee wretched.

Joc.   No way left,  
Unless you through the air could wing your flight,  
Have you to 'scape me.

MES.   After this glad message  
Why wilt thou not allow me to depart,  
Rather than speak of grievous ills? Thy sons  
Are both resolved on a most impious deed :  
Apart from either army to engage  
In single combat, to the Argive troops  
And the assembled citizens of Thebes  
Have they addressed such language as ne'er ought  
To reach their ears. Eteocles began :  
Above the field high on a tower he stood,  
Commanding silence first to be proclaimed  
Through all the host, and cried : "O peerless chiefs  
Of the Achaian land, who, to invade  
This city, from the realms of Danaus come,  
And ye who spring from Cadmus, in the cause  
Of Polynices barter not your lives,  
Nor yet on my behalf ; I, from such dangers  
To save you, with my brother will engage  
In single combat, and if him I slay  
Here in this palace shall I reign alone,  
But I to him the city will yield up  
If I am vanquished : from the bloody strife  
Desisting, ye to Argos shall return,  
Nor perish in a foreign land : enough  
Of Thebans too on this ensanguined plain  
Lie breathless corses." With these words his speech  
The dauntless chief concluded. From the ranks,  
Thy offspring, Polynices, then advanced  
And the proposal praised, while, with a shout,  
*The Argive and the Theban hosts, who deemed*

Such combat just, their public sanction gave.  
Then was the truce agreed on; 'twixt both hosts  
The generals met, and by a solemn oath  
Engaged themselves the compact to fulfil.  
In brazen panoply, without delay  
The sons of aged *Cedipus* were clad :  
His friends, the noblest *Theban* youths, equipped  
The ruler of this land, the *Argive* chiefs  
Armed his antagonist ; both stood conspicuous  
In glittering mail, their looks betrayed no change,  
And at each other's breast with frantic rage  
They longed to hurl the spear. Meantime their friends  
Passed by, and with these words their courage roused :  
" On thee, O *Polynices*, it depends  
To rear an image of triumphant *Jove*,  
And add fresh glories to the *Argive* state."  
But to *Eteocles* they cried : " Thou fight'st  
The battles of thy native land, obtain  
A conquest and the sceptre will be thine."  
Exhorting them to combat thus they spoke ;  
Meanwhile the seers the fleecy victims slew,  
Drew forth the reeking entrails, and observed  
Whether the flames by unpropitious damps  
Were checked, or mounted in a spiral blaze,  
The twofold signs of victory or defeat.  
But if thou canst do aught by sage advice  
Or magic incantation, go, dissuade  
Thy sons from this accursed strife ; the danger  
Is imminent, and horror must attend  
On such a conflict : with abundant tears  
Wilt thou bewail their fate if thou this day  
Of both thy sons art reft.

*Joc.* Come forth, my daughter,  
*Antigone*, thy fortunes now are such  
As will not suffer thee to lead the dance  
Amid thy virgin train—thou, with thy mother,  
Must hasten to prevent two valiant youths,  
Thy brothers, rushing upon instant death,  
*Else will they perish by each other's hand.*

ANTIGONE, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

ANT. Before these gates, my mother, with what sounds  
Of recent horror com'st thou to alarm  
Thy friends.

JOC. Ere now, my daughter, both thy brothers  
Have lost their lives.

ANT. What sayst thou ?

JOC. They went forth  
Resolved on single combat.

ANT. Wretched me !  
What more hast thou, O mother, to relate ?

JOC. Nought that can give thee joy, but follow me.

ANT. Say whither must I go, and leave behind  
My virgin comrades ?

JOC. To the host.

ANT. I blush  
To mingle with the crowd.

JOC. These bashful fears  
Are such as in thy present situation  
Become thee not.

ANT. How can my help avail ?

JOC. Thou haply mayst appease this impious strife  
Betwixt thy brothers.

ANT. Mother, by what means ?

JOC. By falling prostrate at their knees with me.

ANT. Lead on betwixt the van of either host,  
This crisis will admit of no delay.

JOC. Haste, O my daughter, haste, for if my sons  
I haply can prevent ere they begin  
Th' accurst encounter, I shall yet behold  
The blessed sun ; but if I find them slain  
With them will I partake one common grave.

[*Exeunt* JOCASTA and ANTIGONE.]



CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

Ah, what boding horror throws  
 Chilling damps into my breast,  
 How is this whole frame opprest  
 By sympathetic pity for the woes  
 Of her who to those valiant youths gave birth :  
 But which of her loved children twain  
 His sword with kindred gore shall stain  
 (Avert it, righteous Jove, and thou, O genial earth !)  
 And in the strife a brother slay,  
 The stroke descending through his cloven shield ?  
 To whom the sad last tribute shall I pay,  
 A breathless corse stretcht weltering on the field ?

II.

Woe to thee, thou Theban ground !  
 Those twin lions fired with rage  
 Couch their lances to engage,  
 And stand prepared to aim the deadly wound.  
 In evil hour the thought of single fight  
 Entered their souls. While many a tear,  
 Shuddering with excess of fear,  
 For them I vainly shed, their dirge will I recite,  
 Though in a harsh barbaric strain ;  
 Their destined portion slaughter is at hand,  
 Ere Phœbus sinks into the western main  
 Their forfeit lives the furies shall demand.  
 But I my warbled lamentations cease,  
 For, with a brow by clouds of grief o'ercast,  
 Creon, approaching these abodes, I view.

CREON, CHORUS.

CRE. Ah me ! shall I bewail my private woes  
 Or those of Thebes surrounded by such clouds  
 As Acheron exhales ! My valiant son  
 Died for his country, an illustrious name

Obtaining, but to me a source of grief.  
 That self-devoted victim's mangled corse  
 I, from yon rock, the dragon's curst abode,  
 Wretch that I am, have in these hands just borne :  
 With lamentations my whole house resounds.  
 I, a forlorn old man, my aged sister  
 Jocasta come to fetch, that she may lave  
 And on the decent bier stretch forth the corse  
 Of my departed son. For it behoves  
 The living, by bestowing on the dead  
 Funereal honours, to adore the god  
 Who rules in hell beneath.

CHOR. From these abodes,  
 O Creon, is your sister just gone forth,  
 And on her mother's footsteps did attend  
 The nymph Antigone.

CRE. Inform me, whither,  
 And to what scene of recent woe ?

CHOR. She heard  
 Her sons by single combat were resolved  
 Their contest for this palace to decide.

CRE. What sayst thou ? I came hither but to grace  
 With due sepulchral rites my breathless son,  
 Nor of these fresh disasters thought to hear.

CHOR. 'Tis a long time, O Creon, since your sister  
 Went hence ; ere now I deem the fatal strife  
 Betwixt the sons of Œdipus is ended.

CRE. Ah me ! an evil omen I behold  
 In that deep gloom which overcasts the eyes  
 And visage of yon messenger ; he comes,  
 No doubt, the whole transaction to relate.

MESSENGER, CREON, CHORUS.

MES. Wretch that I am ! What language can I find ?

CRE. We are undone ; for with a luckless prelude  
 Thy speech begins.

MES. I yet again exclaim,  
 Ah, wretched me ! Most grievous are the tidings  
 I bring.



CRE. Of any farther ills than those  
Which have already happened, wouldst thou speak

MES. Your sister's sons, O Creon, are no more.

CRE. Great are the woes, alas ! which thou relat'st,  
To me and to this city.

MES. Hast thou heard,  
O house of Ædipus, how both his sons  
Partook one common fate ?

CHOR. These very walls,  
Were they endued with sense, would shed a tear.

CRE. Oh, what a load of misery ! wretched me !

MES. Did you but know of your fresh ills—

CRE. Could fate  
Have any ills more grievous in reserve ?

MES. With her two sons your wretched sister's dead.

CHOR. In concert wake, my friends, the plaintive strain,  
And smite your heads with those uplifted hands.

CRE. Hapless Jocasta, what a close of life  
And wedlock, through th' enigma of the Sphinx,  
Hast thou experienced ! But how both her sons  
Were slain in that dire contest, through the curses  
Pronounced by Ædipus their injured sire,  
Inform me.

MES. How Thebes triumphed o'er th' assailants,  
And her beleaguered turrets saved, you know ;  
Nor are the walls so distant, but from thence  
Ere now those great events you must have heard.  
Soon as in brazen panoply the sons  
Of aged Ædipus were clad, they stood  
In the midway 'twixt either host, kings both,  
Of mighty hosts both chieftains, to decide  
This strife in single combat. Then his eyes  
Towards Argos turning, Polynices prayed :  
" O Juno, awful queen, for I became  
Thy votary since the daughter of Adrastus  
I wedded, and in his dominions found  
A habitation, grant that I may slay  
My brother, and with kindred gore distain  
In the dire conflict this victorious arm ;

For an unseemly wreath, nor to be gained  
Unless I take away the life of him  
Who springs from the same parents, I to thee  
My vows address." Tears burst forth, in a stream  
Equal to the calamity they wailed,  
From multitudes, who on each other gazed.  
Eteocles, then turning to the fane  
Of Pailas, goddess of the golden shield,  
Exclaimed : " O daughter of imperial Jove,  
Grant me with vigorous arm a conquering spear  
To hurl against my brother's breast, and smite  
The man who comes to lay my country waste."  
But when Etruria's trumpet with shrill voice  
Had, like the kindled torch, a signal given  
The combat to begin, with dreadful rage  
Against each other rushing, like two boars  
Whetting their ruthless tusks, they fought till foam  
O'erspread their cheeks ; with pointed spears they made  
A furious onset ; but each warrior stooped  
Behind his brazen target, and the weapon  
Was aimed in vain ; whene'er above the rim  
Of his huge buckler either chief beheld  
The face of his antagonist, he strove  
To pierce it with his spear ; but through the holes  
Bored in the centre of their shields they both  
With caution looked, nor could inflict a wound  
By the protended javelin. A cold sweat,  
Through terror for the safety of their friends,  
From every pore of those who viewed the fight,  
Far more than from the combatants, arose.  
But, stumbling on a stone beneath his feet,  
Eteocles had chanced to leave one leg  
Unguarded by his shield ; then onward rushed  
Fierce Polynices with his lifted spear,  
And marking where he at the part exposed  
Most surely might direct the stroke, his ankle  
Pierced with an Argive weapon, while the race  
Of Danaus gave a universal shout.  
But in this struggle, when the chief who first

Was wounded saw the shoulder of his foe  
 Laid bare, he into Polynices' breast,  
 His utmost force exerting, thrust his spear.  
 Again the citizens of Thebes rejoiced ;  
 But at the point his weapon broke : disarmed  
 Backwards he sunk, and on one knee sustained  
 The weight of his whole body ; from the ground  
 Meantime the fragment of a massive rock  
 Uprearing, he at Polynices threw,  
 And smote his shivered javelin. Of their spears  
 Now both deprived on equal terms they fought  
 With their drawn falchions hand to hand, the din  
 Of war resounded from their crashing shields.  
 Then haply to Eteocles occurred  
 A stratagem in Thessaly devised,  
 Which through his frequent commerce with that land  
 He had adopted ; from the stubborn fight,  
 As if disabled, seeming to retire,  
 His left leg he drew back, but with his shield  
 Guarded his flank, on his right foot sprung forward,  
 Plunged in the navel of the foe his sword,  
 And pierced the spinal joint ; his sides through pain  
 Now writhing, Polynices fell, with drops  
 Of gore the earth distaining. But his brother,  
 As if he in the combat had obtained  
 Decisive victory, casting on the ground  
 His falchion, tore the glittering spoils away,  
 Fixing his thoughts on those alone and blind  
 To his own safety ; hence was he deceived :  
 For, still with a small portion of the breath  
 Of life endued, fallen Polynices, grasping  
 His sword e'en in the agonies of death,  
 The liver of Eteocles transpierced.  
 With furious teeth they rend the crimson soil,  
 And prostrate by each other's side have left  
 The conquest dubious.

CRE.                    Much, alas ! thy woes  
 Do I bewail, for by the strictest ties  
 With thee, O Œdipus, am I connected ;



MES. What does

The wretched mother: pierced with deadly wounds

"Too late to your assistance am I come."

The toil with which she at her breast in vain

Had nurtured them. She ended with a groan.

In which their sister joined: "O ye who cherished

In which the sister joined: O ye who cherished  
A drooping mother's age, my nuptial rites:

Dear brothers, are the humanist men

Dear brothers, ere the hymeneal morn  
Hears us departed." From his inmost breast

Have ye deserted." From his inmost breast

Eteocles with difficulty breathed ;

His mother's voice, however, reached his ear,

And stretching forth his clammy hand, no words

Had he to utter, but his swimming eyes

Shed tears expressive of his filial love.

But Polynices, whose lungs still performed

Their functions, gazing on his aged mother

And sister, cried, "O mother, we are lost ;

I pity thee—my sister too I pity—

And my slain brother, for although that friend

Became a foe, this heart still holds him dear.

But bury me, O thou who gav'st me birth,

And my loved sister, in my native land

Your mediation to appease the city

Uniting that of my paternal soil

Enough for a poor grave I may obtain

Enough for a poor grave I may obtain,  
Though I have lost the empire—Gloss these eyes

Though I have lost the empire. Close these eyes  
With thy maternal hand" (her hand he closed).

Over his eyelids, "and farewell to the day."

Over his eyelids), "and farewell: the shades  
Of night and death."

Of night already compass me around."

Their miserable souls they both breathed forth

At the same instant, When their mother saw

This fresh calamity, no longer able

The weight of her afflictions to sustain,  
She from the corpses of her sons snatched up  
A sword, and an atrocious deed performed ;  
For through her neck the pointed steel she drove,  
And lies in death 'twixt those she held most dear,  
E'en now embracing both. A strife of words  
Broke forth in the two armies : we maintained  
The triumph to our king belonged, but they  
To his antagonist. Amid the chiefs  
A vehement contention rose ; some urged  
That Polynices' spear first gave the wound ;  
Others, that since both combatants were slain  
The victory still was dubious. From the lines  
Of battle now Antigone retired ;  
They rushed to arms ; but with auspicious forethought  
The progeny of Cadmus had not thrown  
Their shields aside : we in an instant made  
A fierce assault, invading by surprise  
The host of Argos yet unsheathed in mail ;  
Not one withstood the shock, they o'er the field,  
In a tumultuous flight were scattered wide :  
Gore streamed from many a corse of those who fell  
Beneath our spears. No sooner had we gained  
A victory in the combat, than some reared  
The statue of imperial Jove, adorned  
With trophies : others, stripping off the shields  
Of the slain Argives, lodged within the walls  
Our plunder : with Antigone, the rest  
Bring hither the remains of the deceased,  
That o'er them every friend may shed a tear,  
For to the city hath this conflict proved  
In part the most auspicious, but in part  
The source of grievous ills.

CHOR. By fame alone  
No longer are the miseries which this house  
Have visited made public ; at the gates  
Are the three corpses to be seen of those  
Who, by one common death, have in the shades  
Of everlasting night their portion found.

ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ANT. The wavy ringlets o'er my tender cheeks  
I cease to spread, regardless of the blush  
Which tinges with a crimson hue the face  
Of virgins. Onward am I borne with speed  
Like the distracted Mænades, not busied  
In Bacchus' rites, but Pluto's, from my hair  
Rending the golden caul, and casting off  
The saffron robe ; o'er the funereal pomp  
(Ah me !) presiding. Well hast thou deserved  
Thy name, O Polynices (wretched Thebes !),  
For thine was not a vulgar strife, but murder  
Retaliated by murder hath destroyed  
The house of Œdipus ; the source whence streamed  
Fraternal gore was parricide. But whom  
Shall I invoke to lead the tuneful dirge,  
Or in what plaints, taught by the tragic Muse,  
Solicit yonder vaulted roofs to join  
With me in tears, while hither I conduct  
Three kindred corpses smeared with gore, to add  
Fresh triumphs to that fury who marked out  
For total ruin the devoted house  
Of thee, O Œdipus, whose luckless skill  
That intricate enigma did unfold,  
And slay the Sphinx who chanted it ? My sire,  
What Grecian, what Barbarian, or what chief,  
In ancient days illustrious, who that sprung  
From human race, hath e'er endured such ills  
As thou hast done, such public griefs endured ?  
Seated upon the topmost spray of oak,  
Of branching pine, the bird, who just lost  
Its mother, wakes a sympathetic song  
Of plaints and anguish : thus o'er the deceased  
Lamenting, I in solitude shall waste  
The remnant of my life 'midst gushing tears.  
O'er whom shall I first cast the tresses rent  
From these disfigured brows, upon the breasts  
Of her who with maternal love sustained



My childhood, or my brothers' ghastly wounds ?  
 Ho ! Œdipus, come forth from thy abode—  
 Blind as thou art, my aged sire, display  
 Thy wretchedness. O thou who, having veiled  
 With thickest darkness those extinguished eyes,  
 Beneath yon roof a tedious life prolong'st :  
 Hear'st thou my voice, O thou, who through the hall  
 Oft mov'st at random, and as oft reliev'st  
 Thy wearied feet on the unwelcome couch ?

ŒDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

ŒD. Why, O my daughter, hast thou called me forth,  
 A wretch, who by this faithful staff supply  
 The want of sight, to the loathed glare of day,  
 From a dark chamber, where I to my bed  
 Have been confined, through those incessant tears  
 My woes extort, grown grey before my time,  
 And wasted by affliction, till I seem  
 As unsubstantial as the ambient air,  
 A spectre rising from the realms beneath,  
 Or wingéd dream ?

ANT. Prepare thyself to hear  
 The inauspicious tidings I relate :  
 Thy sons, thy consort too, the faithful staff  
 Of thy blind footsteps and their constant guide,  
 No longer view the sun. Alas, my sire !

ŒD. Ah me ! The woes I suffer call forth groans  
 And shrieks abundant : but inform me how  
 These three, O daughter, left the realms of light.

ANT. Not to reproach thee, or insult thy woes,  
 My father, but in sadness do I speak ;  
 Thy evil genius, laden with the sword,  
 With blazing torches and with impious war,  
 Rushed on thy sons.

ŒD. Ah me !

ANT. Why groan'st thou thus ?

ŒD. For my dear sons.

ANT. 'Twould aggravate thy griefs,  
 If thou with eyesight wert again endued,



The chariot of the sun, and these remains  
Of the deceased, to view.

ÆD                                How both my sons  
Have lost their lives is evident : but say,  
To what my consort owes her piteous fate ?

ANT. Her tears were seen by all ; her breasts she bared

A suppliant to her sons, whom, near the gate  
Electra, in the mead she found where springs  
The lotus ; like two lions for a den  
With spears had they been fighting : from their wounds,  
Now stiff and cold, scarce oozed the clotted gore,  
Which Mars for a libation had bestowed  
On ruthless Pluto : snatching from the dead  
A brazen sword, she plunged it in her breast :  
Slain by the luckless weapon of her sons,  
Close to her sons thus fell she. On this day  
The god who wrought such horrors, O my sire,  
Hath poured forth his collected stores of wrath  
On this devoted house.

CHOR.                      This day hath proved  
A source of many evils to the house  
Of Ædipus ; may more auspicious fates  
On the remainder of his life attend !

CRE. Your lamentations cease, for it is time  
To mention the interment of the dead.  
But to my words, O Ædipus, attend :  
Eteocles thy son hath to these hands  
Consigned the sceptre of the Theban realm,  
On Hæmon, at his nuptials with thy daughter  
Antigone, to be bestowed in dower :  
I for this cause no longer can allow thee  
Here to reside : for in the clearest terms  
Tiresias has pronounced that, while thou dwell'st  
In these domains, Thebes never can be blest.  
Therefore depart. Nor through a wanton pride,  
Nor any hate I bear thee, do I hold  
Such language, but because I justly dread  
Thy evil genius will destroy this land.

CED. How wretched from the moment of my birth  
Me hast thou made, O fate, if ever man  
Knew misery : ere I from my mother's womb  
Was to the light brought forth, Apollo warned  
The royal Laius with prophetic voice,  
'That I, his future child, who 'gainst the will  
Of Heaven had been begotten, should become  
The murderer of my father. Wretched me !  
But soon as I was born he who begot  
Sought to destroy me, for in me a foe  
He deemed would view the sun : but 'twas ordained  
That I should slay him. While I yet was loth  
To quit the breast, he sent me for a prey  
To savage beasts ; I 'scaped : but would to Heaven  
Cithæron had, for saving me, been plunged  
Into the fathomless and yawning gulf  
Of Tartarus ! Fortune gave me for a servant  
To Polybus. But having slain my sire,  
Wretch that I am, my hapless mother's bed  
Ascending, thence did I at once beget  
Both sons and brothers : them have I destroyed  
By showering down on my devoted race  
The curses I inherited from Laius.  
Yet was not I by nature made so void  
Of understanding as to form a plot  
'Gainst my own eyesight or my children's lives,  
Unless some god had interfered. No more.  
What shall I do ? Ah me ! what faithful guide  
My feet, through blindness tottering, will attend ?  
Jocasta the deceased ? While yet she lived,  
I know she would. Or my two noble sons ?  
They are no more. Have not I youth still left  
Sufficient to find means to gain me food ?  
But where shall I procure it ? Or why thus,  
O Creon, do you utterly destroy me ?  
For you will take away my poor remains  
Of life, if you expel me from this land,  
Yet will not I, by twining round your knees  
*These arms*, put on the semblance of a dastard :

For the renown I gained in days of yore,  
Though miserable, I never will belie.

CRE. Thou with a manly spirit hast refused  
To clasp my knees ; but in the Theban realm  
No longer can I suffer thee to dwell.  
Of the deceased, the one into the palace  
Must be conveyed ; but as for him who came  
With foreign troops to lay his country waste,  
The corse of Polynices, cast it forth  
Unburied from the confines of this land.  
This edict, by a herald, to all Thebes  
Will I announce ; whoe'er shall be detected  
Adorning with a garland his remains,  
Or o'er them scattering earth, shall be with death  
Requited : for, unwept and uninterred,  
He for a prey to vultures must be left.  
No longer, O Antigone, lament  
O'er these three breathless corsers, but with speed  
To your apartment go, and there remain  
Amidst your virgin comrades till to-morrow,  
When Hæmon's bed awaits you.

ANT. O my sire,  
Into what hopeless misery art thou plunged !  
For thee far more than for the dead I moan ;  
Thou hast not aught to make thy weight of woe  
Less grievous : the afflictions thou endur'st  
Are universal. But, O thou new king,  
Of thee I ask, why dost thou treat my father  
With scorn, why banish him from Thebes, why frame  
Harsh laws against a wretched corse ?

CRE. Such counsels  
Were by Eteocles, not me, devised.

ANT. Devoid of sense are they ; thou, too, art frantic,  
Who these decrees obey'st.

CRE. Is it not just  
To execute th' injunctions we receive ?

ANT. No, not if they are base and ill-advised.

CRE. What mean you ? Can it be unjust to cast  
His body to the dogs ?



CRE. You by necessity's superior force  
Will be constrained. For how can you escape.  
The nuptial bond ?

ANT. I on that night will act  
Like one of Danaus' daughters.

CRE. Marked ye not  
How boldly, with what arrogance she spoke ?

ANT. Bear witness, O my dagger, to the oath.

CRE. Why from this wedlock wish you to be freed ?

ANT. My miserable father in his flight  
I will attend.

CRE. A generous soul is yours,  
Abundant folly too.

ANT. I am resolved  
To share his death ; of that, too, be assured.

CRE. Go, leave this realm ; you shall not slay my son.

[Exit CREON.]

ÆD. Thee, for thy zeal, my daughter, I applaud.

ANT. How can I wed, while you my father roam  
A solitary exile ?

ÆD. To enjoy  
Thy better fortunes, stay thou here : my woes  
I will endure with patience.

ANT. Who, my sire,  
Shall minister to you deprived of sight ?

ÆD. I, in whatever field the fates ordain  
That I shall fall, must lie.

ANT. Where's Ædipus,  
And that famed riddle ?

ÆD. Lost, for ever lost :  
My prosperous fortunes from one single day,  
And from one day my ruin I derive.

ANT. May not I also be allowed to take  
A part in your afflictions ?

ÆD. 'Twere unseemly  
For thee, my daughter, from this land to roam  
With thy blind father.

ANT. To a virtuous maid  
Not base, my sire, but noble.



[illegible]

ANT. Here she lies :  
Clasp that dear object in your aged arms.

ÆD. O mother, O my miserable wife !

ANT. A piteous spectacle, o'erwhelmed at once  
By every ill.

CEB. But where's Eteocles'  
And Polynices' corse?

ANT. Stretched on the ground  
Close to each other.

ÆD.                    A blind father's hand  
Place on the visage of each hapless youth.

ANT. Lo, here they are ! Stretch forth your hand, and  
touch  
Your breathless sons.

ÆD.                      Remains of those I loved,  
The wretched offspring of a wretched sire.

ANT. Thy name, O Polynices, shall thy sister  
For ever hold most dear.

ÆD. Now, O my daughter,  
The oracle of Phœbus is fulfilled.

ANT. What oracle? Speak you of any woes  
We have not yet experienced?

ÆD. That in Athens  
An exile I shall die.

ANT.                      Where? In the realm  
Of Attica, what turret shall receive you?

CED. Coloneus' fane, where Neptune's altars rise.  
 But haste, and minister with duteous zeal  
 To thy blind father, since to share my flight  
 Was thy most earnest wish.

ANT. My aged sire,  
Into a wretched banishment go forth :  
O give me that dear hand, for I will guide  
Your tottering steps, as prosperous gales assist  
The voyage of the bark.

ED. Lo, I advance :  
Do thou conduct me, O my hapless daughter.

ANT. I am indeed of all the Theban maids  
The most unhappy.

ÆD. My decrepit feet  
Where shall I place? O daughter, with a staff  
Furnish this hand.

ANT. Come hither, O my sire.  
Here rest your feet: for, like an empty dream,  
Your strength is but mere semblance.

ÆD. Grievous exile.  
A weak old man, he from his native land  
Drives forth. My sufferings are, alas! most dreadful.

ANT. What is there in the sufferings you complain of  
Peculiarly distressful? Doth not justice  
Behold the sinner, and with penal strictness  
Each foolish action of mankind repay?

ÆD. Still am I he whom the victorious Muse  
Exalted to the skies when I explained  
The dark enigma by that fiend proposed.

ANT. Why speak of the renown which you obtained  
When you o'ercame the Sphinx? Cease to recount  
Past happiness. For, O my sire, this curse  
Awaited you, an exile from your country  
To die we know not where. My virgin comrades  
Leaving to wail my absence, I depart,  
Far from my native land ordained to roam  
Unlike a bashful maid.

ÆD. How is thy soul  
With matchless generosity endued!

ANT. Such conduct 'midst my father's woes shall  
make

My name illustrious. Yet am I unhappy  
Through the foul scorn with which they treat my brother,  
Whose weltering corse without these gates is thrown  
Unburied. His remains, ill-fated youth,  
Though death should be the punishment, with earth  
I privately will cover, O my sire.

ÆD. Go join thy comrades.

ANT. With loud complaints enough  
Have I assailed the ear of every friend.



ÆD. But at the altars thou must offer up  
Thy supplications.

ANT. They with my distress  
Are satiated.

ÆD. To Bacchus' temple then  
Repair, on that steep mountain where no step  
Profane invades his orgies, chosen haunt  
Of his own Mænades.

ANT. Erst in the hides  
Of Theban stags arrayed, I on these hills  
Joined in the dance of Semele, bestowing  
A homage they approved not on the gods.

ÆD. Illustrious citizens of Thebes, behold  
That Ædipus, who the enigma solved—  
The first of men when I had singly quelled  
The Sphinx's ruthless power, but now o'erwhelmed  
With infamy, I from this land am driven  
A miserable exile. But why groan,  
Why utter fruitless plaints? For man is bound  
To bear the doom which righteous Heaven awards.

CHOR. O venerable victory, take possession  
Of my whole life, nor ever cease to twine  
Around these brows thy laureate wreath divine.

# THE SUPPLIANTS.

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ÆTHRA.	EVADNE.
CHORUS OF ARGIVE MATRONS.	IPHIS.
THESEUS.	A BOY, <i>supposed to be MELON, the</i>
ADRASTUS.	<i>son of ETEOCLUS.</i>
HERALD.	MINERVA.
MESSENGER.	

SCENE—THE TEMPLE OF CERES, AT ELEUSINE, IN THE  
ATHENIAN TERRITORY.

ÆTHRA, CHORUS, ADRASTUS.

ÆT. Thou guardian power of Eleusine's land,  
O Ceres, and ye venerable priests  
Of that benignant goddess, who attend  
This temple, blessings for myself I crave,  
For my son Theseus, Athens, and the realm  
Of Pitheus, who, when his paternal care  
Had reared my childhood in a wealthy house,  
Gave me to Ægeus, to Pandion's son ;  
So Phœbus' oracles decreed. These prayers  
I offered up when I yon aged matrons  
Beheld, who their abodes at Argos leave,  
And with their suppliant branches at my knees  
Fall prostrate, having suffered dreadful woes :  
Now are they childless ; for before the gates  
Of Thebes were slain their seven illustrious sons,  
Whom erst Adrastus, King of Argos, led  
To battle, when for exiled Polynices,

His son-in-law, he strove to gain a share  
Of Ædipus' inheritance. The corpses  
Of those who by the hostile spear were slain  
Their mothers would consign to earth ; but, spurning  
The laws which righteous Heaven ordained, the victors  
Will not allow them to remove the dead.  
But needing equally with them my succour  
Adrastus, shedding many a tear, lies stretched  
On earth, bewailing the disastrous fate  
Of those brave troops whom he to battle led.  
Oft he conjures me to implore my son,  
Either by treaty, or his forceful spear,  
Back from those hostile fields to bring the slain  
And lodge them in a tomb : on him alone  
And Athens he this honourable task  
Imposes. Hither were the victims borne,  
That we a prosperous tillage may obtain,  
And for this cause I from my house am come  
Into this temple, where the bearded grain  
First rising from the fruitful soil appeared.  
Holding loose sprays of foliage in my hand,  
I wait before the unpolluted altars  
Of Proserpine and Ceres ; for these mothers,  
Grown hoar with age and of their children reft,  
With pity moved, and to the sacred branches  
Yielding a due respect. I to the city  
Have sent a herald to call Theseus hither,  
That from the Theban land he may remove  
The causes of their sorrow, or the gods  
Appeasing by some pious rites, release me  
From the constraint these suppliant dames impose.  
In all emergencies discretion bids  
Our feeble sex to seek man's needful aid.

CHOR. An aged woman prostrate at thy knees,  
Thee I implore my children to redeem,  
Who welter on a foreign plain, unnerved  
By death and to the savage beasts a prey :  
Thou seest the piteous tears which from these eyes  
Unbidden start, and torn with desperate hands

My wrinkled flesh. What hope remains for me,  
 Who neither, at my home, have been allowed  
 The corses of my children to stretch forth,  
 Nor, heaped with earth, behold their tombs arise?  
 Thou, too, illustrious dame, hast borne a son  
 Crowning the utmost wishes of thy lord,  
 Speak, therefore, what thou think'st of our distress,  
 In language suited to the griefs I feel  
 For the deceased whom I brought forth; persuade  
 Thy son, whose succour we implore, to march  
 Across Ismenos' channel, and consign  
 To me the bodies of the slaughtered youths,  
 That I beneath the monumental stone  
 May bury them with every sacred rite.  
 Though not by mere necessity constrained,  
 We at thy knees fall down and urge our suit  
 Before these altars of the gods, where smokes  
 The frequent incense: for our cause is just:  
 And through the prosperous fortunes of thy son,  
 With power sufficient to remove our woes  
 Art thou endued: but since the ills I suffer  
 Thy pity claim, a miserable suppliant,  
 I crave that to these arms thou wouldst restore  
 My son, and grant me to embrace his corse.

## ODE.

## I.

ÆT. Here a fresh group of mourners stands,  
 Your followers in succession wring their hands.  
 CHOR. Attune expressive notes of anguish,  
 O ye sympathetic choir,  
 And in harmonious accents languish,  
 Such as Pluto loves t' inspire.  
 Tear those cheeks of pallid hue,  
 And let gore your bosoms stain,  
 For from the living is such honour due  
 To the shades of heroes slain,  
 Whose corses welter on th' embattled plain.



## II.

I feel a pleasing sad relief,  
 Unsated as I brood o'er scenes of grief;  
 My lamentations, never ending,  
 Are like the moisture of the sea  
 In drops from some high rock descending,  
 Which flows to all eternity.  
 For those youths who breathe no more  
 Nature bids the mother weep,  
 And with incessant tears their loss deplore:  
 In oblivion would I steep  
 My woes, and welcome death's perpetual sleep.

THESEUS. ÆTHRA, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. What plaints are these I hear? Who strike their  
 breasts

Attuning lamentations for the dead  
 In such loud notes as issue from the fane?  
 Borne hither by my fears with wingéd speed,  
 I come to see if any recent ill  
 May have befallen my mother; she from home  
 Hath long been absent. Ha! what objects new  
 And strange are these which now mine eyes behold?  
 Fresh questions hence arise: my aged mother  
 Close to the altar seated with a band  
 Of foreign matrons, who their woes express  
 In various warbled notes, and on the ground,  
 Shed from their venerable eyes a stream  
 Of tears: their heads are shorn, nor is their garb  
 Suited to those who tend the sacred rites?  
 What means all this? My mother, say; from you  
 I wait for information, and expect  
 Some tidings of importance.

ÆT.

O my son,

These are the mothers of those seven famed chiefs  
 Who perished at the gates of Thebes: you see  
 How they with suppliant branches on all sides  
 Encompass me.

THE. But who is he who groans  
So piteously, stretched forth before the gate?  
ÆT. Adrastus, they inform me, king of Argos.  
THE. Are they who stand around those matrons' sons?  
ÆT. Not theirs; they are the children of the slain.  
THE. Why with those suppliant tokens in their hands  
Come they to us?

ÆT. I know: but it behoves  
Them, O my son, their errand to unfold.  
THE. To thee who in a fleecy cloak art wrapped,  
My questions I address: thy head unveil,  
Cease to lament, and speak; for while thy tongue  
Utters no accent nought canst thou obtain.

ADR. O king of the Athenian land, renowned  
For your victorious arms, to you, O Theseus,  
And to your city, I a suppliant come.

THE. What's thy pursuit, and what is it thou need'st?  
ADR. Know you not how ill-fated was the host  
I led?

THE. Thou didst not pass through Greece in silence.  
ADR. The noblest youths of Argos there I lost.  
THE. Such dire effects from luckless war arise.  
ADR. From Thebes I claimed the bodies of the slain.  
THE. Didst thou rely on heralds to procure  
Leave to inter the dead?

ADR. But they who slew them  
Deny this favour.

THE. What can they allege  
'Gainst a request which justice must approve?

ADR. Ask not the reason: they are now elate  
With a success they know not how to bear.

THE. Art thou come hither to consult me then,  
Or on what errand?

ADR. 'Tis my wish, O Theseus,  
That you the sons of Argos would redeem.

THE. But where is Argos now? Were all her boasts  
Of no effect?

ADR. We by this one defeat  
Are ruined, and to you for succour come.

THE. This on thy private judgment, or the voice  
Of the whole city?

ADR. All the race of Danaus  
Implore you to inter the slain.

THE. Why led'st thou  
'Gainst Thebes seven squadrons?

ADR. To confer a favour  
On my two sons-in-law.

THE. To what brave chiefs  
Of Argos didst thou give thy daughters' hands?

ADR. My family in wedlock I with those  
Of our own nation joined not.

THE. Didst thou yield  
Those Argive damsels to some foreign bridegrooms?

ADR. To Tydeus, and to Polynices, sprung  
From Theban sires.

THE. What dotage could induce thee  
To form alliances like these?

ADR. Dark riddles  
Phœbus propounded, which my judgment swayed.

THE. Such union for the virgins to prescribe,  
What said Apollo?

ADR. That I must bestow  
My daughters on the lion and the boar.

THE. But how didst thou interpret this response  
Of the prophetic god?

ADR. By night two exiles  
Came to my door.

THE. Say, who and who : thou speak'st  
Of both at once.

ADR. Together Tydeus fought  
And Polynices.

THE. Hence didst thou on them  
As on ferocious beasts bestow thy daughters?

ADR. Their combat that of savages I deemed.

THE. Why did they leave their native land?

ADR. Thence fled  
Tydeus polluted with his brother's gore.

THE. But why did Œdipus' son forsake  
The Theban realm?



ADR.                   The curses of his sire  
Thence drove him, lest his brother he should slay.

THE. A prudent cause for this spontaneous exile  
Hast thou assigned.

ADR.                   But they who stayed at home  
Oppressed the absent.

THE.                   Did his brother rob him  
Of the inheritance?

ADR.                   I to decide  
This contest went, and hence am I undone.

THE. Didst thou consult the seers, and from the altar  
Behold the flames of sacrifice ascend?

ADR. Alas ! you urge me on that very point  
Where most I failed.

THE.                   Thou led'st thy troops, it seems,  
Although the gods approved not, to the field.

ADR. Yet more, Amphiaraus opposed our march.

THE. Didst thou thus lightly thwart the will of  
Heaven?

ADR. I by the clamorous zeal of younger men  
Was hurried on.

THE.                   Regardless of discretion,  
Thy courage thou didst follow.

ADR.                   Many a chief  
Hath such misconduct utterly destroyed.  
But O most dauntless of the Grecian race,  
Monarch of the Athenian realm ; I blush,  
Thus prostrate on the ground, to clasp your knees,  
Grown grey with age, and once a happy king !  
But I to my calamities must yield.  
Redeem the dead, in pity to my woes,  
And to these mothers of their sons bereft,  
To whom the burdens which on hoary age  
Attend are added to their childless state,  
Yet hither they endured to come, and tread  
A foreign soil, though their decrepit feet  
Could hardly move : the embassy they bring  
Hath no connection with the mystic rites  
Of Ceres ; all they crave is to inter  
The slain, as they at their mature decease

Would from their sons such honours have obtained.  
 'Tis wisdom in the opulent to look  
 With pity on the sorrows of the poor,  
 And in the poor man to look up to those  
 Who have abundant riches, as examples  
 For him to imitate, and thence acquire  
 A wish his own possessions to improve.  
 They too who are with prosperous fortunes blest  
 Should feel a prudent dread of future woes ;  
 And let the bard who frames the harmonious strain  
 Exert his genius in a cheerful hour,  
 For if his own sensations are unlike  
 Those which he speaks of, never can the wretch  
 Who by affliction is at home opprest  
 Give joy to others : there's no ground for this.  
 But you perhaps will ask me : " Passing o'er  
 The land of Pelops, why would you impose  
 Such toil on the Athenians ? " This reply  
 Have I a right to make : " The Spartan realm  
 Is prone to cruelty, and in its manners  
 Too variable ; its other states are small  
 And destitute of strength ; your city only  
 To this emprise is equal, for 'tis wont  
 To pity the distressed, and hath in you  
 A valiant king ; for want of such a chief  
 Have many cities perished."

CHOR. I address thee  
 In the same language ; to our woes, O Theseus,  
 Extend thy pity.

THE. I with others erst  
 Have on this subject held a strong dispute ;  
 For some there are who say the ills which wait  
 On man exceed his joys ; but I maintain  
 The contrary opinion, that our lives  
 More bliss than woe experience. For if this  
 Were not the fact, we could not still continue  
 To view the sun. That god, whoe'er he was,  
 I praise, who severed mortals from a life  
 Of wild confusion and of brutal force,

Implanting reason first, and then a tongue  
That might by sounds articulate proclaim  
Our thoughts, bestowing fruit for food, and drops  
Of rain descending from the skies, to nourish  
Earth's products and refresh the thirst of man,  
Yet more, fit coverings, from the wintry cold  
To guard us, and Hyperion's scorching rays ;  
The art of sailing o'er the briny deep,  
That we by commerce may supply the wants  
Of distant regions, to these gifts by Heaven  
Is added ; things the most obscure, and placed  
Beyond our knowledge, can the seer foretell,  
By gazing on the flames which from the altar  
Ascend the skies, the entrails of the victims,  
And flight of birds. Are we not then puffed up  
With vanity, if, when the gods bestow  
Conveniences like these on life, we deem  
Their bounty insufficient ? Our conceit  
Is such, we aim to be more strong than Jove :  
Though pride of soul be all that we possess,  
We in our own opinion are more wise  
Than th' immortal powers. To me thou seem'st  
One of this number, O thou wretch devoid  
Of reason, to Apollo's mystic voice  
Yielding blind deference, who thy daughters gav'st  
To foreign lords, as if the gods were swayed  
By human passions. Thy illustrious blood  
With foul pollution mingling, thine own house  
Thus hast thou wounded. Never should the wise  
In leagues of inauspicious wedlock yoke  
Just and unjust : but prosperous friends obtain  
Against the hour of danger. Jove, to all  
One common fate dispensing, oft involves  
In the calamities which guilt draws down  
Upon the sinner him who ne'er transgressed.  
But thou, by leading forth that Argive host  
To battle, though the seers in vain forbade,  
Despising each oracular response,  
And wilfully regardless of the gods,



Hast caused thy country's ruin, overruled  
 By those young men who place their sole delight  
 In glory, and promote unrighteous wars,  
 Corrupting a whole city; this aspires  
 To the command of armies, by the pomp  
 Attending those who hold the reins of power  
 A second is corrupted; some there are  
 Studious of filthy lucre, who regard not  
 What mischief to the public may ensue.  
 Three ranks there are of citizens: the rich,  
 Useless, and ever grasping after more;  
 While they, who have no property, and lack  
 E'en necessary food, by fierce despair  
 And envy actuated, send forth their stings  
 Against the wealthy, by th' insidious tongue  
 Of some malignant demagogue beguiled;  
 But of these three the middle rank consists  
 Of those who save their country, and enforce  
 Each wholesome usage which the state ordains.  
 Shall I then be thy champion? What pretence  
 That would sound honourably can I allege  
 To gain my countrymen? Depart in peace!  
 For baleful are the counsels thou hast given  
 That we should urge prosperity too far.

CHOR. He did amiss: but the great error rests  
 On those young men, and he deserves thy pardon.

ADR. I have not chosen you to be the judge  
 Of my afflictions, but to you, O king,  
 As a physician come: nor, if convicted  
 Of having done amiss, to an avenger  
 Or an opprobrious censor, but a friend  
 Who will afford his help: if you refuse  
 To act this generous part, to your decision  
 I must submit: for what resource have I?  
 But, O ye venerable dames, retire,  
 Leaving those verdant branches here behind,  
 And call to witness the celestial powers,  
 The fruitful earth with Ceres lifting high  
 Her torch, and that exhaustless source of light,

The sun, that we by all the gods in vain  
 Conjured you. (It is pious to relieve  
 Those who unjustly suffer, and the tears  
 Of these your hapless kindred are you bound  
 To reverence, for your mother was the daughter  
 Of Pitheus.) Pelops' son, born in that land  
 Which bears the name of Pelops, we partake  
 One origin with you : will you betray  
 These sacred ties, and from your realm cast forth  
 Yon hoary suppliants, nor allow the boon  
 Which at your hands they merit ? Act not thus ;  
 For in the rocks hath the wild beast a place  
 Of refuge, in the altars of the gods  
 The slave : a city harassed by the storm  
 Flies to some neighbouring city : for there's nought  
 On earth that meets with everlasting bliss.

CHOR. Rise, hapless woman, from this hallowed fane  
 Of Proserpine, to meet him ; clasp his knees,  
 Entreat him to bestow funereal rites  
 On our slain sons, whom in the bloom of youth  
 Beneath the walls of Thebes I lost : my friends  
 Lift from the ground, support me, bear along,  
 Stretch forth these miserable, these aged hands.  
 Thee, O thou most beloved and most renowned  
 Of Grecian chiefs, I by that beard conjure,  
 While at thy knees, thus prostrate on the ground,  
 I for my sons, a wretched suppliant sue,  
 Or, like some helpless vagabond, pour forth  
 The warbled lamentation. Generous youth,  
 Thee I entreat ; let not my sons, whose age  
 Was but the same as thine, in Thebes remain  
 Unburied, for the sport of savage beasts !  
 Behold what tears stream from these swimming eyes,  
 As thus I kneel before thee, to procure  
 For my slain sons an honourable grave.

THE. Why, O my mother, do you shed the tear,  
 Covering your eyes with that transparent veil ?  
 Is it because you heard their plaints ? I too  
 Am much affected. Raise your hoary head,

Nor weep while seated at the holy altar  
Of Ceres.

ÆT. Ah !

THE. You ought not thus to groan  
For their afflictions.

ÆT. O ye wretched dames !

THE. You are not one of them.

ÆT. Shall I propose  
A scheme, my son, your glory to increase,  
And that of Athens ?

THE. Wisdom oft hath flowed  
From female lips.

ÆT. I meditated words  
Of such importance, that they make me pause.

THE. You speak amiss, we from our friends should hide  
Nought that is useful.

ÆT. If I now were mute  
Myself hereafter might I justly blame  
For keeping a dishonourable silence,  
Nor through the fear lest eloquence should prove  
Of no effect, when issuing from the mouth  
Of a weak woman, will I thus forego  
An honourable task. My son, I first  
Exhort you to regard the will of Heaven,  
Lest through neglect you err, else will you fail  
In this one point, though you in all beside  
Think rightly. I moreover still had kept  
My temper calm, if to redress the wrongs  
Which they endure an enterprising soul  
Had not been requisite. But now, my son,  
A field of glory opens to your view,  
Nor these bold counsels scruple I to urge  
That by your conquering arm you would compel  
Those men of violence, who from the slain  
Withhold their just inheritance a tomb,  
Such necessary duty to perform,  
And quell those impious miscreants who confound  
The usages established through all Greece :  
*For the firm bond which peopled cities holds*



In union is th' observance of the laws.  
But some there are who will assert "that fear  
Effeminately caused thee to forego  
Those wreaths of fame thy country might have gained;  
Erst with a bristled monster of the woods  
Didst thou engage, nor shun th' inglorious strife :  
But now called forth to face the burnished helm  
And pointed spear art found to be a dastard."  
Let not my son act thus : your native land,  
Which for a want of prudence hath been scorned,  
You see, tremendous as a gorgon, rear  
Its front against the scorner : for it grows  
Under the pressure of severest toils.  
The deeds of peaceful cities are obscure,  
And caution bounds their views. Will you not march,  
My son, to succour the illustrious dead,  
And these afflicted matrons? For their safety  
I fear not, while with justice you go forth  
To battle. Though I now on Cadmus' sons  
Behold auspicious fortune smile, I trust  
They will ere long experience the reverse  
Of her unstable die : for she o'erturns  
All that is great and glorious.

CHOR.                               Dearest Æthra,  
Well didst thou plead Adrastus' cause and mine :  
Hence twofold joy I feel.

THE.                               He hath deserved,  
O mother, the severe reproofs which flowed  
From my indignant tongue, and I my thoughts  
Of those pernicious counsels whence arose  
His ruin have expressed. Yet I perceive  
What you suggest, that ill would it become  
The character I have maintained to fly  
From danger. After many glorious deeds  
Achieved among the Greeks, I chose this office,  
An exemplary punishment t' inflict  
On all the wicked. Therefore from no toils  
Can I shrink back, for what would those who hate me  
Have to allege, when you who gave me birth,

And tremble for my safety, are the first  
 Who bid me enter on the bold emprise?  
 I on this errand go, and will redeem  
 The dead by words persuasive, or, if words  
 Are ineffectual, with protended spear,  
 And in an instant, if the envious gods  
 Refuse not their assistance. But I wish  
 That the whole city may a sanction give:  
 They to my pleasure their assent would yield;  
 But to the scheme, if I propose it first  
 To be debated, I shall find the people  
 More favourable: for them I made supreme,  
 And on this city, with an equal right  
 For all to vote, its freedom have bestowed.  
 Taking Adrastus with me for a proof  
 Of my assertions, 'midst the crowd I'll go,  
 And when I have persuaded them, collecting  
 A chosen squadron of Athenian youths,  
 Hither return, and, halting under arms,  
 To Creon send a message to request  
 The bodies of the slain. But from my mother,  
 Ye aged dames, those holy boughs remove,  
 That I may take her by that much-loved hand,  
 And to the royal dome of Ægeus lead.  
 Vile is that son who to his parents yields  
 No grateful services, for from his children  
 He who such glorious tribute pays receives  
 Whate'er through filial duty he bestowed.

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O Argos, famed for steeds, my native plain,  
 Sure thou, with all Pelasgia's wide domain,  
 Hast heard the king's benevolent design,  
 And wilt in grateful strains revere the powers divine.

I. 2.

May Theseus put an end to all my woes,  
 Rescuing those bloody corpses from our foes

Still objects of maternal love ; his aid  
Shall by th' Inachian realm's attachment be repaid.

## II. 1.

To pious deeds belongs a mighty name,  
And cities saved procure eternal fame.  
Will he do this—with us in friendship join,  
And to the peaceful tomb our slaughtered sons consign ?

## II. 2.

Minerva's town, support a mother's cause,  
Thou from pollution canst preserve the laws  
Which man holds sacred, thou rever'st the right,  
Sett'st the afflicted free, and quell'st outrageous might.

## THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. [*to a HERALD.*] Thou, always practising this art,  
has served

Thy city, and to various regions borne  
My embassies : when, therefore, thou hast crossed  
Asopus, and Ismenos' stream, address  
The Theban monarch in these courteous words :  
" Theseus, who dwells in an adjacent realm,  
And hath a right such favour to receive,  
Requests you as a friend t' inter the dead,  
And gain the love of all Erectheus' race."  
To this petition if they yield assent,  
Come back again in peace : if they refuse,  
Thy second message shall be this : " My band  
Of chosen youths in glittering mail arrayed  
They must expect : for at the sacred fount  
Callichore e'en now the assembled host  
Halts under arms, prepared for instant fight."  
For in this arduous enterprise, with zeal  
The city of its own accord engaged,  
When they perceived my wish. But who intrudes  
E'en while I am yet speaking ? He appears  
To be a Theban herald, though I doubt it.  
Stay ; for thy errand he may supersede,  
And by his coming obviate my designs.



THEBAN HERALD, THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. HER. Who is the sovereign ruler of this land?  
To whom must I unfold the message sent  
By Creon, who presides o'er the domains  
Of Cadmus, since before Thebes' sevenfold gates,  
Slain by his brother Polynices' hand,  
Eteocles expired?

THE. With an untruth  
Thy speech, O stranger, hast thou oped by asking  
For a king here : for Athens, this free city,  
By no one man is governed, but the people  
Rule in succession year by year ; to wealth  
No preference is allowed, but the poor man  
An equal share of empire doth possess.

THE. HER. By yielding up this point, to me you  
grant

Advantage such as equals the first throw  
At dice : the city whence I came is ruled  
By one man only, not by multitudes ;  
No crafty orator with specious words  
For his own interest turns the wavering minds  
Of its inhabitants, this moment dear  
To all around and lavish of his favours,  
The next a public bane, yet he conceals  
By some fresh calumny his errors past,  
And 'scapes the stroke of justice. How can they  
Who no sound judgments form, the people, guide  
A city well ? For time instead of haste  
Affords the best instructions. But the man  
Who tills the ground, by poverty deprest,  
If to that poverty he add the want  
Of due experience, through the manual toils  
He is engaged in, to the public good  
Can ne'er look up. Those too of noble birth  
Are much disgusted when the worthless hold  
Posts of the highest rank, and he who erst  
Was nothing with his tongue beguiles the crowd.

THE. This witty herald to his message adds

The flowers of eloquence. But on this strife  
Since thou hast entered, hear me ; for 'twas thou  
That gav'st the challenge to debate. No curse  
Is greater to a city than a king.  
For first, where'er no laws exist which bind  
The whole community, and one man rules,  
Upon his arbitrary will alone  
Depend the laws, and all thy rights are lost.  
But under written laws the poor and rich  
An equal justice find ; and if reproached,  
They of low station may with equal scorn  
Answer the taunting arrogance of wealth ;  
And an inferior, if his cause be just,  
Conquers the powerful. This too is a mark  
Of freedom, where the man who can propose  
Some wholesome counsel for the public weal  
Is by the herald called upon to speak :  
Then he who with a generous zeal accepts  
Such offer gains renown, but he who likes not  
His thoughts to utter still continues mute.  
How can a city be administered  
With more equality ? Where'er the people  
Are sovereigns of the land, a rising race  
Of heroes gives them joy ; but these a king  
Esteems his foes ; the brave, with those who bear  
The character of wise, he slays, still trembling  
For his ill-gotten power. How can that city  
On a firm basis stand where valiant youths,  
Like the green sheaf cut from the vernal mead,  
Are in their bloom mown down ? Why then acquire  
Large fortunes for our children, to augment  
The treasures of a king ? Or why train up  
Our virgin daughters with an anxious care,  
Merely to gratify the loose desires  
Of an imperious monarch, and cause tears  
To stream from their fond parents ? May I end  
My life ere these indignant eyes behold  
The violation of my daughter's honour !  
Thus far in answer to thy speech. Now say,

What claims hast thou to make on this domain?  
Wert thou not hither by thy city sent,  
Thou the impertinent harangues thou cam'st  
To utter shouldst bewail. A messenger  
When he hath spoken what his lords enjoin  
Ought to depart with speed. Next time let Creon  
A less loquacious messenger despatch  
To the Athenian land.

CHOR.                      Alas ! when fortune  
Profusely showers her gifts upon the wicked,  
How insolent they are, as if they deemed  
They should for ever prosper !

THE, HER. I will now  
Speak what I have in charge ; your thoughts indeed  
Differ from mine on these contested points,  
But I and all the Theban race pronounce  
This interdict : let not Adrastus enter  
The land, or if he be already here,  
Ere yon bright chariot of the sun descends,  
Regardless of these mystic branches borne  
By suppliant matrons, drive him from the realm,  
Nor furiously attempt to take away  
The slain by force, for in the Argive state  
You have no interest. If to my advice  
You yield due credence, by no boisterous waves  
O'ertaken in your course, you cross the deep  
Shall sail your nation's pilot, else the storm  
Of direful war shall burst on us and you,  
And your allies. Deliberate well, nor give  
A haughty answer, by my words provoked,  
And of the freedom of your city vain :  
For a reliance on superior might  
Is most pernicious, oft hath it embroiled  
Contending states, and roused immoderate ire.  
For when whole cities by their votes decide  
In favour of a war, there's not a man  
Expects to perish ; all avert the doom  
Which threatens their own, upon another's head.  
But while they give their suffrages, if death  
Were present to their eyes, Greece ne'er had owed



Its ruin to a frantic lust for war.  
We all know how to choose the better part,  
Distinguish good from ill, and are aware  
That peace, the benefactress of mankind,  
Is preferable to war; by every Muse  
Held justly dear, and to the fiends of hell  
A foe, in population she delights,  
And wealth abundant. But, these blessings slighting,  
We wickedly embark in needless wars;  
A man to servitude consigns the man  
His arms subdued, on city the same doom  
City imposes. But you aid our foes  
E'en after they are dead, and would inter  
With pomp funereal those who owe their fate  
To their own arrogance. Forsooth, you deem  
That justice was infringed, when smoked the body  
Of frantic Capaneus, by thunder smitten,  
Upon that ladder, which he at the gates  
Erecting, swore he would lay waste our city,  
Or with dread Jove's consent or in despite  
Of the vindictive god: nor should th' abyss  
Have snatched away that Augur, swallowing up  
His chariot in the caverns of the earth:  
Nor was it fitting that those other chiefs  
Should at the gates lie breathless, with their limbs  
Disjointed by huge stones; boast that your wisdom  
Transcends e'en that of Jove himself, or own  
The gods may punish sinners. It behoves  
Those who are wise to love their children first,  
Their aged parents next, and native land,  
Whose growing fortunes they are bound t' improve,  
And not dismember it. In him who leads  
A host, or pilot stationed at the helm,  
Rashness is dangerous: he who by discretion  
His conduct regulates desists in time,  
And caution I esteem the truest valour.

ADR. The vengeance Jove inflicted on our crimes  
Should have sufficed: but it behoves not thee,  
Thou most abandoned miscreant, to insult us  
With contumelious words.

THE.

Adrastus, peace!

Restrain thy tongue, and in my speech forbear  
To interrupt me : for this herald brings  
For thee no embassy, but comes to me,  
And I must answer. First will I confute  
The bold assertion which thou first didst make.  
I own not the authority of Creon,  
Nor can he by superior might enforce  
From Athens these submissions : to its source  
The river shall flow upward ere we yield  
To base compulsion. I am not the cause  
Of this destructive war ; nor did I enter  
The realms of Cadmus with those arméd bands,  
But to inter the bodies of the slain  
(No violence to Thebes, no bloody strife  
Commencing) is, I deem, an act of justice,  
And authorized by the established laws  
Of every Grecian state. In what respect  
Have I transgressed ? If from those Argive chiefs  
Ye suffered aught, they perished : on your foes  
With glory ye avenged yourselves, and shame  
To them ensued. No longer any right  
Have ye to punish. O'er the dead let dust  
Be strewn, and every particle revert  
Back to its ancient seat whence into life  
It migrated, the soul ascend to Heaven,  
The body mix with earth : for we possess  
By no sure tenure this decaying frame,  
But for a dwelling merely, through the space  
Of life's short day, to us doth it belong,  
And after our decease the foodful ground  
Which nourished should receive it back again.  
Think'st thou the wrong thou dost, when thou deniest  
Interment to the dead, confined to Argos ?  
No ; 'tis a common insult to all Greece,  
When of due obsequies bereft the slain  
Are left without a tomb : the brave would lose  
Their courage should such usages prevail.  
Com'st thou to threaten me in haughty strain,  
Yet meanly fear'st to let the scattered mould

Cover the dead? What mischiefs can ensue?  
 Will they, when buried, undermine your walls,  
 Or in earth's hollow caves beget a race  
 Of children able to avenge their wrongs?  
 Absurdly hast thou lavished many words  
 In base and groundless terrors. O ye fools,  
 Go make yourselves acquainted with the woes  
 To which mankind are subject. Human life  
 Is but a conflict : some there are whose bliss  
 Approaches them, while that of others waits  
 Till a long future season, others taste  
 Of present joys : capricious Fortune sports  
 With all her anxious votaries ; through a hope  
 Of better times to her the wretched pay  
 Their homage ; he who is already blest  
 Extols her matchless bounty to the skies,  
 And trembles lest the veering gale forsake him.  
 But we, who know by what precarious tenure  
 We hold her gifts, should bear a trifling wrong  
 With patience, and, if we the narrow bounds  
 Of justice overleap, abstain from crimes  
 Which harm our country. If thou ask, what means  
 This prelude? I reply : To us who wish  
 To see them laid in earth with holy rites,  
 Consign the weltering corpses of the slain,  
 Else is it clear what mischiefs must ensue,  
 I will go forth, and bury them by force.  
 For 'mong the Greeks it never shall be said  
 This ancient law, which from the gods received  
 Its sanction, though transmitted down to me  
 And to the city where Pandion ruled,  
 Was disregarded."

CHOR. Courage ! While the light  
 Of justice is thy guide, thou shalt escape  
 Th' invidious censures of a busy crowd.

THE. HER. May I comprise in a few words the  
 whole  
 Of our debate?

THE Speak whatsoe'er thou wilt :  
 For no discreet restraint thy tongue e'er knew.

THE. HER. The corpses of those Argive youths from Thebes  
You never shall remove.

THE. Now to my answer  
Attend, if thou art so disposed.

THE. HER. I will:  
For in your turn I ought to hear you speak.

THE. On the deceased will I bestow a grave,  
When I have borne their relics from the land  
Washed by Asopus' stream.

THE. HER. In combat first  
Great hazards must you brave.

THE. Unnumbered toils  
Have I ere now in other wars endured.

THE. HER. Was there to you transmitted from your sire  
Sufficient strength to cope with every foe?

THE. With every villain: for on virtuous deeds  
No punishment would I inflict.

THE. HER. Both you  
And Athens have been wont in various matters  
To interfere.

THE. To many a bold emprise  
She owes the prosperous fortunes she enjoys.

THE. HER. Come on, that soon as you attempt to enter  
Our gates the Theban lance may lay you low.

THE. Can any valiant champion from the teeth  
Of a slain dragon spring?

THE. HER. This to your cost  
Shall you experience, though you still retain  
The rashness which untutored youth inspires.

THE. By thy presumptuous language thou my soul  
To anger canst not rouse: but from this land  
Depart, and carry back those empty words  
With which thou hither cam'st: for we in vain  
Have held this conference. [*Exit THEBAN HERALD.*]

Now must we collect

Our numerous infantry in arms arrayed,  
With all who mount the chariot, and the steed  
Caparisoned, his mouth distilling foam,  
Urge to the Theban realm; for I will march



Up to the sevenfold gates by Cadmus reared  
 This arm sustaining a protended spear,  
 And be myself the herald. But stay here,  
 Adrastus, I command thee ; nor with mine  
 Blend thy disastrous fortunes : for the host  
 I under happier auspices will lead  
 To the embattled field, renowned in war,  
 And furnished with the spear to which I owe  
 My glories. I need only one thing more,  
 Help from the gods, who are the friends of justice :  
 For where all these advantages concur  
 They to our better cause ensure success.  
 But valour's of no service to mankind  
 Unless propitious Jove his influence lend.

[Exit THESEUS.]

ADR. Unhappy mothers of those hapless chiefs,  
 How doth pale fear disturb this anxious breast !

CHOR. What new alarm is this thou giv'st ?

ADR. The host

Of Pallas our great contest will decide.

CHOR. By force of arms, or conference, dost thou mean ?

ADR. 'Twere better thus ; but slaughter, the delight  
 Of Mars, and battle, through the Theban streets,  
 With many a beaten bosom shall resound.

CHOR. Wretch that I am ! What cause shall I assign  
 For such calamities ?

ADR. But some reverse  
 Of fortune may again lay low the man  
 Who, swollen with gay prosperity, exults ;  
 This gives me confidence.

CHOR. Th' immortal gods  
 Thou represent'st as if those gods were just.

ADR. For who but they o'er each event preside ?

CHOR. Heaven's partial dispensations to mankind  
 I oft contemplate.

ADR. Thou thy better judgment  
 To thy past fears dost sacrifice. Revenge  
 Calls forth revenge, and slaughter is repaid  
 By slaughter ; for the gods into the souls

Of evil men pernicious thoughts infuse,  
And all things to their destined period guide.

## ODE.

## I.

CHOR. O could I reach yon field with turrets crowned  
And leave thy spring Callichore behind.

ADR. Heaven give thee pinions to outstrip the wind !

CHOR. Waft me to Thebes for its two streams renowned.

ADR. There might'st thou view the spirits of the slain  
Whose corpses welter on the hostile plain.

Still dubious are the dread awards of fate.

But the undaunted king of this domain,

In yon embattled field what dangers may await.

## II.

CHOR. On you, ye pitying gods, again I call,  
In you my trust I place, your might revere,  
And with this hope dispel each anxious fear.  
O Jove, whom love's soft bandage did enthrall,  
When beauteous Io met thy fond embrace,  
Erst to a heifer changed, from whom we trace  
Our origin, make Argos still thy care.  
Thy image rescuing from its loathed disgrace,  
To the funereal pyre these heroes will we bear

## MESSENGER, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

MES. With many acceptable tidings fraught  
I come, ye dames, and am myself just 'scaped  
(For I was taken prisoner in that battle,  
When the seven squadrons, led by the deceased,  
Upon the banks of Dirce's current fought) ;  
It is my joyful errand to relate  
The conquest Theseus gained : but your fatigue  
Of asking tedious questions will I spare ;  
For to that Capaneus, th' ill-fated chief  
Whom Jove with flaming thunderbolts transpierced,  
Was I a servant.



CHOR. O my friend, you bring  
A favourable account of your return,  
And Theseus' mighty deeds : but if the host  
Of generous Athens too be safe, most welcome  
Will be the whole of what you now relate.

MES. 'Tis safe ; and what Adrastus strove t' effect,  
When from the stream of Inachus he led  
His forces, and against the Theban towers  
Waged war, is now accomplished.

CHOR. But relate  
How Ægeus' son with his intrepid comrades  
Jove's trophies reared, for you th' engagement saw,  
And us who were not there can entertain.

MES. In a right line the solar beams began  
To strike the earth ; upon a tower I stood  
Commanding a wide prospect o'er the field,  
Above the gate Electra. Thence I marked  
The warriors of three tribes to the assault  
Advancing in three several bands, arrayed  
In ponderous armour, to Ismenos' stream  
The first division, I am told, its ranks  
Extended ; the illustrious son of Ægeus,  
Their monarch, was among them ; round their chief  
The natives of Cecropia's ancient realm  
Were stationed ; the Paraliens, armed with spears,  
Close to the fount of Mars ; on either flank  
Of battle stood the cavalry disposed  
In equal numbers, and the brazen cars  
Screened by Amphion's venerable tomb.  
Meanwhile the Theban forces were drawn forth  
Without the bulwarks, placing in their rear  
The bodies which they fought for ; fiery steed  
To steed ; to chariot, chariot stood opposed.  
But Theseus' herald, in a voice so loud  
That all might hear, cried out, " Be mute, ye people ;  
Attend in strictest silence, O ye troops  
Who spring from Cadmus ! We are come to claim  
The bodies of the slain, which 'tis our wish  
To bury, in compliance with the laws

Established through all Greece : we for their deaths  
Require not an atonement." To these words  
No answer by his herald Creon gave,  
Firm under arms the silent warrior stood.  
They who the reins of adverse chariots held  
Began the battle, hurrying through the ranks  
With glowing wheels, nor shunned the lifted spear ;  
Some fought with swords, while others urged their  
steeds

Again into the fray, encountering those  
Who had repelled them. But when Phorbas, leader  
Of the Athenian cavalry, observed  
The chariots of the foe in throngs advance,  
He and the chieftains of the Theban horse  
In the encounter mingled, and by turns  
Prevailed and were discomfited. I speak not  
From fame alone, but what myself beheld,  
For I was present where the chariots fought,  
And the brave chiefs who in those chariots rode.  
In an assemblage of so many horrors,  
I know not which to mention first ; how thick  
The clouds of dust which blackened all the sky  
Or those who, tangled in the stubborn reins,  
Were dragged at random o'er the field, and bathed  
In their own gore, their chariots overthrown  
Or broken ; others headlong from their seat  
Were violently dashed upon the ground,  
And breathed their last amid their splintered wheels.  
When Creon saw his cavalry prevail,  
Hastily snatching up a pointed spear,  
Onward he marched impetuous, lest his troops  
Should lose their courage ; nor through abject fear  
Did Theseus' bands recoil : without delay  
On to the combat, sheathed in glittering arms,  
The dauntless chief advanced, and now began  
In the main body of each adverse host  
A universal conflict ; with the slain  
The slayer mingled lay ; while clamorous shouts  
Were heard from those that to their comrades cried :

"Strike! With your spears oppose Erectheus' race."

A legion sprung from the slain dragon's teeth  
With courage fought, and pressed on our left wing  
So hard that it gave way, while by our right  
Discomfited the Theban squadrons fled.  
Thus in an equal balance long remained  
The fate of war, but here again our chief  
Deserved applause, for he not only gained  
All that advantage his victorious troops  
Could give him, but proceeded to that wing  
Which had been worsted: with so loud a shout  
That earth resounded, "Valiant youths," he cried,  
"If ye repel not those protended spears  
Of the fierce dragon's brood, Minerva's city  
Is utterly destroyed." These words infused  
New confidence in all th' Athenian host.  
Then, snatching up the ponderous club he won  
Near Epidaurus, with his utmost force  
He swang that formidable weapon round,  
Severing, like tender poppies from the stalks,  
At the same stroke, their necks and helméd heads,  
Yet scarcely could he put to flight the troops  
Of Argos. With a shout, then vaulting high,  
I clapped my hands, while to the gates they ran.  
Through every street re-echoed mingled shrieks  
Of young and old, who by their fears impelled  
Crowded the temples. But when he with ease  
The fortress might have entered, Theseus checked  
The ardour of his host, and said he came  
Not to destroy the city, but redeem  
The bodies of those slaughtered chiefs. A man  
Like this should be selected for the leader  
Of armies, who 'midst dangers perseveres  
Undaunted, and abhors the madding pride  
Of those who, flushed with triumph, while they seek  
To mount the giddy ladder's topmost round,  
Forfeit that bliss they else might have enjoyed.

CHOR. Now I have seen this unexpected day,  
I deem that there are gods, and feel my woes



Alleviated since these audacious miscreants  
Have suffered their deserts.

ADR. Why do they speak  
Of wretched man as wise? On thee, O Jove,  
Our all depends, and whatsoe'er thou wilt  
We execute. The power of Argos seemed  
Too great to be resisted; we relied  
On our own numbers and superior might.  
Hence, when Eteocles began to treat  
Of peace, though he demanded moderate terms,  
Disdaining to accept it, we rushed headlong  
Into perdition: while the foolish race  
Of Cadmus, like some beggar who obtains  
Immense possessions suddenly, grew proud,  
And pride was the forerunner of their ruin.  
Mortals, devoid of sense, who strain too hard  
Your feeble bow, and after ye have suffered  
Unnumbered evils justly, to the voice  
Of friends still deaf, are guided by events;  
And cities, who by treaty might avert  
Impending mischief, choose to make the sword,  
Rather than reason, umpire of your strife.  
But whither do these vain reflections tend?  
What I now wish to learn is, by what means  
Thou didst escape: I into other matters  
Will then make full inquiry.

MES. While the tumult  
Of battle in the city still prevailed,  
I through that gate came forth by which the troops  
Had entered.

ADR. But did ye bear off the bodies  
Of those slain chiefs for whom the war arose?

MES. Who o'er seven noble houses did preside.

ADR. What's this thou saidst? But where are all the  
rest

Of the deceased, an undistinguished crowd?

MES. Lodged in a tomb amid Cithæron's vale.

ADR. Beyond or on this side the mount? And who  
Performed this mournful duty?

MES.    Theseus' self :  
The rock Eleutheris o'ershades their grave.

ADR. But as for those he hath not yet interred,  
Where did he leave their corses?

MES. Near at hand.  
For every duty that affection prompts  
Is placed within our reach.

ADR. Did slaves remove  
The dead with their ignoble hands?

MES. No slave  
Performed that office : if you had been present.  
You would have cried, " What love doth Theseus bear  
To our slain friends ! " He laved the grisly wounds  
Of these unhappy youths, the couch prepared,  
And o'er their bodies threw the decent veil.

**ADR. Most heavy burden ! too unseemly task !**

MES. What shame to feeble mortals can arise  
From those calamities which none escape?

ADR. Ah! would to Heaven that I with them had died!

MES. In vain you weep, and cause full many a tear  
To stream from these your followers.

ADR. Here I stand  
As the chief mourner, though by them, alas !  
Have I been taught to grieve. Of that no more.  
With hands uplifted I advance to meet  
The dead, and, pouring forth a votive dirge  
To socthe hell's grisly potentate, once more  
Will I accost those friends, of whom deprived  
I wail my solitude. This only loss  
Man never can retrieve, the fleeting breath  
Of life ; but the possessions we impair  
By various means may be again acquired.

[*Exit* MESSENGER.]

**CHORUS.**

ODE.

**I.**

Dashed are our joys with mingled pains ;  
While Athens and its leaders claim

Fresh wreaths of laurel with augmented fame ;  
 Doomed to behold the pale remains  
 Of my loved children, bitter, pleasing sight,  
 after grief shall feel an unforeseen delight.

## II.

O that old Time's paternal care  
 Had kept me from the nuptial yoke.  
 What need had I of sons ? This grievous stroke  
 Could never then have been my share :  
 But now I see perpetual cause to mourn ;  
 My children, from these arms for ever are ye torn.  
 But lo ! the corpses of those breathless youths,  
 Are borne in pomp funereal. Would to Heaven  
 I with my sons might perish, and descend  
 The shades of Pluto !

ADR.                                Matrons, o'er the dead,  
 Pale tenants of the realms beneath, now vent  
 Your loudest groans, and to my groans reply.

CHOR. O children, whom in bitterness of soul,  
 With a maternal fondness, we accost ;  
 To thee, my breathless son, to thee I speak.

ADR. Ah me ! my woes !

CHOR.                                We have endured, alas !  
 Afflictions the most grievous.

ADR.                                O ye dames  
 Of my loved Argos, view ye not my fate ?

CHOR. Me, miserable and childless they behold.

ADR. Bring to their hapless friend each bloody corse  
 Of those famed chiefs, dishonourably slain,  
 And by the hands of cowards : when they fell,  
 The battle ended.

CHOR.                                O let me embrace  
 My dearest sons, and in these arms sustain !

ADR. Thou from these hands receiv'st them : such a  
 weight

Of anguish is too grievous to be borne.

CHOR. By their fond mothers, you forget to add.  
 Wretch that I am !

ADR.                                Ah, listen to my voice.



CHOR. Both to yourself and us these plaints belong.

ADR. Would to the gods that the victorious troops  
Of Thebes had slain and laid me low in dust !

CHOR. O that in wedlock I had ne'er been joined  
To any lord !

ADR. Ye miserable mothers  
Of those brave youths, who for their country died,  
An ocean of calamity behold.

CHOR. We, hopeless mourners, with our nails have torn  
These bleeding visages, and on our heads  
Strewn ashes.

ADR. Ah ! ah me ! Thou opening ground  
Swallow me up. O scatter me, ye storms ;  
And may Jove's lightning on this head descend !

CHOR. You witnessed in an evil hour the nuptials  
Of your two daughters, in an evil hour  
Apollo's mystic oracles obeyed.

The wife whom you have taken to your arms  
Is that destructive fiend who left the house  
Of Ædipus, and chose with you to dwell.

THESEUS, ADRASTUS, CHORUS.

THE. The questions I designed to have proposed  
To you, ye noble matrons, when ye uttered  
Your loud complaints amidst th' assembled host,  
I will omit, and mean to search no farther  
Into the moving history of your woes.  
But now of thee, Adrastus, I inquire,  
Whence sprung these chiefs whose prowess did transcend  
That of all other mortals ? Thou art wise,  
And these transactions, which full well thou know'st,  
Canst to our youthful citizens unfold.  
For, of their bold achievements, which exceed  
The power of language to express, myself  
Have been a witness, when they strove to storm  
The Theban walls. But lest I should provoke  
Thy laughter, this one question will I spare ;  
With what brave champion in th' embattled field  
Each fought, and from the weapon of what foe  
Received the deadly wound : for these vain tales

But serve an equal folly to display  
In those who either hear them, or relate,  
Should he who mingles in the thickest fray,  
From either army, while unnumbered spears  
Before his eyes are thrown, distinctly strive  
To ascertain what dauntless warrior launched  
With surest aim the missile death. These questions  
I cannot ask, nor credit those who dare  
To make such rash assertions. For the man  
Who to his foes in combat stands opposed  
Can scarce discern enough to act the part  
Which his own duty calls for.

ADR.

Now attend,

For no unwelcome task have you imposed  
On me, of praising those departed friends,  
Of whom with truth and justice I would speak.  
Do you behold yon hero's graceful form,  
Through which the bolt of Jove hath forced its way?  
This youth is Capaneus, who, though the fortune  
Which he possessed was ample, ne'er grew vain  
Through wealth, nor of himself more highly deemed  
Than if he had been poor, but shunned the man  
Who proudly glories in a sumptuous board,  
And treats a frugal competence with scorn;  
For he maintained that life's chief good consists not  
In the voracious glutton's full repast,  
But that a moderate portion will suffice.  
In his attachments still was he sincere,  
And zealous for the good of those he loved,  
Whether at hand or absent still the same;  
Small is the number of such friends as these;  
His manners were not counterfeit, his lips  
Distilled sweet courtesy, and left not aught  
That he had promised, either to the slave,  
Or citizen of Argos, unperformed.  
Eteoclus I next proceed to name,  
For every virtuous practice much renowned,  
Small were the fortunes of this noble youth,  
But in the Argive region he enjoyed

Abundant honours : though his wealthier friends  
Oft sought to have presented him with gold,  
His doors were closed against that specious bane,  
Lest he might seem to act a servile part,  
By riches made a bondsman : he abhorred  
The guilt of individuals, not the land  
Which nourished them : to cities no reproach  
Is due because their rulers are corrupt.  
Such also was Hippomedon, the third  
Of these illustrious chiefs ; while yet a boy,  
To the delights the tuneful Muses yield,  
A life of abject softness, he disdained  
To turn aside : a tenant of the fields,  
His nature he to the severest toils  
Inuring, took delight in manly deeds,  
With fiery coursers issuing to the chase,  
Or twanged with nervous hands the sounding bow,  
And showed a generous eagerness to make  
His vigour useful to his native land.  
There lies the huntress Atalanta's son,  
Parthenopæus, by a beauteous form  
Distinguished : in Arcadia was he born,  
But, journeying thence to Inachus' stream,  
In Argos nurtured ; having there received  
His education, first, as is the duty  
Of strangers in the country where they dwell,  
He never made a foe, nor to the state  
Became obnoxious, waged no strife of words  
(Whence citizens and foreigners offend),  
But, stationed in the van of battle, fought  
To guard the land as if he had been born  
An Argive, and whene'er the city prospered  
Rejoiced, but was with deepest anguish stung  
If a reverse of fortune it endured :  
Though many lovers, many blooming nymphs  
To him their hearts devoted, he maintained  
A blameless conduct. The great praises due  
To Tydeus I concisely will express ;  
Though rude of speech, yet terrible in arms,



Devising various stratagems, surpassed  
In prudence by his brother Meleager,  
By warlike arts he gained an equal name,  
Finding sweet music in the crash of shields :  
Nature endued him with the strongest thirst  
For glory and for riches ; but his soul  
In actions, not in words, its force displayed.  
From this account, O Theseus, wonder not  
Such generous youths before the Theban towers  
Feared not to meet an honourable death.  
For education is the source whence springs  
Ingenuous shame, and every man whose habits  
Have erst been virtuous, not without a blush,  
Becomes a dastard : courage may be taught ;  
Just as a tender infant learns to speak  
And listen to the words he comprehends not ;  
But he such wholesome lessons treasures up  
Till he is old. From this example train  
Your progeny in honour's arduous paths.

CHOR. I educated thee, my hapless son,  
Thee in this womb sustained, and childbirth pangs  
For thee endured ; but now hath Pluto seized  
The fruit of all my toils, and I, who bore  
An offspring, am abandoned to distress,  
Without a prop to stay my sinking age.

ADR. The gods themselves in louder strains extol  
Oicleus' illustrious son, whom yet alive  
They with his rapid coursers snatched away  
And bore into the caverns of the earth.

THE. Nor shall I utter falsehood while my tongue  
Recounts the praise of Polynices, son  
Of Œdipus ; for as his guest the chief  
Received me, ere, a voluntary exile,  
Abandoning his native city reare  
By Cadmus, to the Argive realm he went.  
But know'st thou how I wish thou shouldst dispose  
Of their remains ?

ADR. All that I know is this,  
Whatever you direct shall be obeyed.

THE. As for that Capaneus, who by the name  
Launched from Jove's hand was smitten—

ADR. Would you burn  
His corse apart as sacred?

THE. Even so.  
But all the rest on one funereal pyre,

ADR. Where mean you to erect his separate tomb?

THE. I hear these hapless youths have fixed the spot  
For his interment.

ADR. To your menial train  
Must this unwelcome office be consigned.

THE. But to those other warriors will I pay  
Due honours. Now advance, and hither bring  
Their corses.

ADR. To your children, wretched matrons,  
Draw near.

THE. Adrastus, sure thou hast proposed  
What cannot be expedient.

ADR. Why restrain  
The mothers from their breathless sons' embrace?

THE. Should they behold their children thus deformed,  
They would expire with grief. The face we loved,  
Soon as pale death invades its bloom, becomes  
A loathsome object. Why wouldst thou increase  
Their sorrows?

ADR. You convince me. Ye must wait  
With patience; for expedient are the counsels  
Which Theseus gives. But when we have consumed  
In blazing pyres their corses, ye their bones  
Must take away. Why forge the brazen spear,  
Unhappy mortals, why retaliate slaughter  
With slaughter? O desist; no more engrossed  
By fruitless labours, in your cities dwell,  
Peaceful yourselves, and through the nations round  
A general peace diffusing. For the term  
Of human life is short, and should be passed  
With every comfort, not in anxious toils.

[*Exeunt THESEUS and ADRASTUS.*]

## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I.

No more a mother's happy name  
 Shall crown my fortunes or exalt my fame,  
 'Midst Argive matrons blest with generous heirs.  
 Of all the parent's hopes bereft,  
 By Dian, patroness of childbirth left,  
 Ordained to lead a life of cares,  
 To wandering solitude consigned,  
 I like a cloud am driven before the howling wind.

## II.

We, seven unhappy dames, deplore  
 The seven brave sons we erst exulting bore,  
 Illustrious champions who for Argos bled :  
 Forlorn and childless, drenched in tears,  
 Downward I hasten to the vale of years,  
 But am not numbered with the dead  
 Or living : a peculiar state  
 Is mine, on me attends an unexampled fate.

## III.

For me nought now remains except to weep :  
 In my son's house are left behind  
 Some tokens ; well I know those tresses shorn,  
 Which no wreath shall ever bind,  
 No auspicious songs adorn,  
 And golden-haired Apollo scorn ;  
 With horror from a broken sleep  
 Roused by grief at early morn  
 My crimson vest in gushing tears I steep.

But I the pyre of Capaneus behold  
 Already blazing, near his sacred tomb  
 Heaped high ; and placed without the fane, those gifts  
 Which Theseus' self appropriates to the dead :  
 Evadne too, the consort of that chief,  
 Who by the thunderbolts of Jove was slain,



Daughter of noble Iphis, is at hand.  
 Why doth she stand upon the topmost ridge  
 Of yon ærial rock, which overlooks  
 This dome, as if she hither bent her way?

EVADNE, CHORUS.

ODE.

I.

EVA. What cheering beams of radiant light  
 Hyperion darted from his car,  
 And how did Cynthia's lamp shine bright,  
 While in the skies each glittering star  
 Rode swiftly through the drear abodes of night,  
 When Argive youths a festive throng  
 T' accompany the nuptial song  
 For Capaneus and me awaked the lyre?  
 Now frantic hither am I borne  
 Resolved to share my lord's funereal pyre,  
 With him to enter the same tomb,  
 End with him this life forlorn,  
 In Pluto's realms, the Stygian gloom.  
 If Heaven assent, the most delightful death  
 Is when with those we love we mix our parting breath.  
 CHOR. Near to its mouth you stand and overlook  
 The blazing pyre, Jove's treasure, there is lodged  
 Your husband whom his thunderbolts transpierced.

II.

EVA. Life's utmost goal I now behold,  
 For I have finished my career:  
 With steadfast purpose uncontrolled  
 My steps doth fortune hither steer.  
 In the pursuit of honest fame grown bold,  
 Am I determined from this steep  
 Into the flames beneath to leap,  
 And mine with my dear husband's ashes blend;  
 I to the couch of Proserpine,  
 With him in death united, will descend.  
 Thee in the grave I'll ne'er betray:

Life and wedlock I resign  
 May some happier spousal day  
 At Argos for Evadne's race remain,  
 And every wedded pair such constant loves maintain.

CHOR. But, lo, 'tis he! I view your aged sire,  
 The venerable Iphis, who approaches  
 As a fresh witness of those strange designs  
 Which yet he knows not, and will grieve to hear.

IPHIS, CHORUS, EVADNE.

IPH. O most unhappy! Hither am I come,  
 A miserable old man, with twofold griefs  
 By Heaven afflicted; to his native land,  
 The body of Eteoclus, my son,  
 Slain by a Theban javelin, to convey,  
 And seek my daughter, with impetuous step  
 Who rushed from her apartment; in the bond  
 Of wedlock she to Capaneus was joined,  
 And wishes to accompany in death  
 Her husband; for a time she in my house  
 Was guarded, but since I no longer watched her,  
 'Midst the confusion of our present ills  
 She 'scaped; but we have reason to suspect  
 That she is here; inform us, if ye know.

EVA. Why do you question them? Here on this rock  
 I, O my father, o'er the blazing pyre  
 Of Capaneus stand, hovering like a bird.

IPH. What gale hath borne thee hither? Or what means  
 That robe, my daughter? Wherefore, from thy home  
 Departing, to this region didst thou fly?

EVA. 'Twould but exasperate you to be informed  
 Of my intentions: therefore, O my sire,  
 Am I unwilling you should hear.

IPH. What schemes  
 Are these which thy own father may not know?

EVA. In you I should not find an equal judge  
 Of my intentions.

IPH. But on what account  
 Thy person with that habit hast thou graced?

EVA. A splendid action, O my sire, the robe  
I wear denotes.

IPH. Ill-suited is a garb  
So costly to the matron who bewails  
Her husband's death.

EVA. For an unheard-of purpose  
In gay habiliments am I attired.

IPH. Why stand'st thou near the grave and blazing  
pyre?

EVA. Hither I come to gain a mighty conquest.

IPH. O'er whom wouldst thou prevail? I wish to know.

EVA. O'er every woman whom the sun beholds.

IPH. By Pallas in the labours of the loom  
Instructed, or with a judicious soul,  
That best of gifts endued?

EVA. With dauntless courage:  
For in the grave I with my breathless lord  
Shall be united.

IPH. What is it thou say'st?  
Or with what views a riddle thus absurd  
Hast thou propounded?

EVA. Hence into the pyre  
Of Capaneus will I leap down.

IPH. My daughter,  
Before the multitude forbear to hold  
This language.

EVA. There is nothing I have said  
But what I wish that every Argive knew.

IPH. Yet will I not consent thou shouldst fulfil  
Thy desperate purpose.

EVA. [*as she is throwing herself from the Rock.*]

It is all the same:  
Nor can you now by stretching forth your hand  
Stop my career. Already have I taken  
The fatal leap, and hence descend, with joy  
Though not indeed to you, yet to myself,  
And to my lord, with whose remains I blaze.

CHOR. Thou hast committed an atrocious deed,  
O woman.

IPH. Wretched me ! I am undone,  
Ye dames of Argos,

CHOR. Horrid are these ills  
Which thou endur'st, the deed thine eyes behold  
Is the most daring.

IPH. No man can ye find  
Than me more miserable.

CHOR. O wretch ! A portion  
Of *Ædipus'* fortunes was reserved  
For thee in thy old age : thou too, my city,  
Art visited by the severest woes.

IPH. Why was this privilege, alas ! denied  
To mortals, twice to flourish in the bloom  
Of youth, and for a second time grow old ?  
For in our houses, we, if aught is found  
To have been ill contrived, amend the fault  
Which our maturer judgment hath descried ;  
While each important error in our life  
Admits of no reform : but if with youth  
And ripe old age we twice had been indulged,  
Each devious step that marked our first career  
We in our second might set right. For children,  
Seeing that others had them, much I wished,  
And pined away with vehement desire :  
But if I had already felt these pangs,  
And from my own experience learnt how great  
Is the calamity to a fond father  
To be bereft of all his hopeful race,  
I into such distress had never fallen  
As now o'erwhelms me, who begot a youth  
Distinguished by his courage, and of him  
Am now deprived. No more. But what remains  
For me—wretch that I am ? Shall I return  
To my own home, view many houses left  
Without inhabitants, and waste the dregs  
Of life in hopeless anguish, or repair  
To the abode of *Capaneus*, with joy  
By me frequented while my daughter lived ?  
But she is now no more, who loved to kiss

My furrowed cheeks and stroked this hoary head.  
 Nought can delight us more than the attention  
 Which to her aged sire a daughter pays :  
 Though our male progeny have souls endued  
 With courage far superior, yet less gently  
 Do they these soothing offices perform.  
 Will ye not quickly drag me to my home,  
 And in some dungeon's gloomy hold confine,  
 To wear away these aged limbs by famine?  
 Me, what, alas ! can it avail to touch  
 My daughter's bones ! What hatred do I bear  
 To thee, O irresistible old age !  
 Them, too, my soul abhors who vainly strive  
 To lengthen out our little span of life ;  
 By th' easy vehicle, the downy couch,  
 And by the boasted aid of magic song,  
 Labouring to turn aside from his career  
 Remorseless death : when they who have no longer  
 The strength required to serve their native land  
 Should vanish, and to younger men give place.

SEMICHOR. Lo, there the bones of my slain sons, whose  
 corpses

Already in funereal pyres have blazed,  
 Are borne along. Support a weak old woman :  
 The pangs which for my children's loss I feel  
 Deprive me of all strength. I long have mourned,  
 And am enervated by many griefs.  
 Can any curse severer be devised  
 For mortals than to see their children dead ?

BOY. O my unhappy mother, from the flames  
 I bear my father's relics, which my sorrows  
 Have made more weighty : this small urn contains  
 All my possessions.

SEMICHOR. Why dost thou convey  
 The sad and pleasing cause of many tears  
 To the afflicted mothers of the slain,  
 A little heap of ashes in the stead  
 Of those who in Mycenæ were renowned ?

BOY. But I, a wretched orphan, and bereft





THESEUS, ADRASTUS, IPHIS, CHORUS.

THE. Behold ye, O Adrastus, and ye dames  
Of Argive race, these children, in their hands  
Bearing the relics of their valiant sires,  
By me redeemed? Athens and I, these gifts  
On you bestow : still are ye bound to cherish  
A memory of those benefits, obtained  
Through my victorious spear. To all I speak  
In the same terms. With honour due repay  
This city, and the kindness which from us  
Ye have experienced to your children's children  
Transmit through latest ages. But let Jove  
Bear witness, with what tokens of our bounty  
Ye from this realm depart.

ADR. Full well we know  
What favours you, O Theseus, have conferred  
Upon the Argive land, when most it needed  
A benefactor ; hence will we retain  
Such gratitude as time shall ne'er efface.  
For we, the generous treatment which from you  
We have received, as largely should requite.

THE. Is there aught else I can bestow ?

ADR. All hail ;  
For you and Athens every bliss deserve.

THE. May Heaven this wish accomplish ! and mayst  
thou,  
My friend, with equal happiness be crowned.

MINERVA, THESEUS, ADRASTUS, IPHIS, CHORUS.

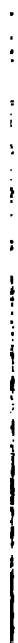
MIN. Attend, O Theseus, to Minerva's words,  
And thou shalt learn what thou must do to serve  
This country ; give not to the boys these bones  
To bear to Argos, on such easy terms  
Dismissing them. But to requite the toils  
Of thee and of thy city, first exact  
A solemn oath, and let Adrastus swear,  
For he, its king, for the whole Argive realm  
Is qualified to answer, and be this  
The form prescribed : " Ne'er will Mycene's sons

Into this land a hostile squadron lead,  
But hence, with their protended spears, repel  
Each fierce invader." If the sacred oath  
They impiously should violate, and march  
Against thy city, pray that utter ruin  
May light on Argos, and its perjured state.  
But where the gods require that thou shalt slay  
The victims, I will tell thee; in thy palace  
On brazen feet a massive tripod stands  
Which erst Alcides, when the walls of Troy  
He from their basis had o'erthrown, and rushed  
New labours to accomplish, gave command  
Close to the Pythian altar should be placed.  
When on this tripod thou hast slain three sheep,  
The destined victims, in its hollow rim  
Inscribe the oath; then to that god consign  
Who o'er the Delphic realm presides: such tablet  
To Greece shall testify the league ye form,  
But in the bowels of the earth conceal  
The knife with which the victims thou hast slain,  
For this, when shown, should they hereafter come,  
With armed bands, this city to assail,  
Will strike Mycene's warriors with dismay,  
And their return embitter. When these rites  
Thou hast performed, the ashes of the dead  
Send from this region, and to them assign  
That grove in which their corpses have by fire  
Been purified, the spot where meet three roads  
Sacred to th' Isthmian goddess. This to thee,  
O Theseus, have I spoken: to the boys  
Who spring from those slain Argive chiefs I add:  
Ismenos' city, soon as ye attain  
Maturer years, shall ye in ruin lay,  
Retaliating the slaughter of your sires;  
Thou too, Ægialeus, a youthful chief,  
Shalt in thy father's stead command the host,  
And marching from Ætolia's realm, the son  
Of Tydeus, Diomedes by name; the down  
No sooner shall o'erspread your blooming cheeks,

Than with a band of Argive warriors clad  
In glittering armour, with impetuous rage,  
Ye the seven Theban turrets shall assail ;  
Them, in your wrath, shall ye, in manhood's prime,  
Like whelps of lions visit, and lay waste  
The city. What have I foretold, ere long  
Will be accomplished. By applauding Greece  
Called the Epigoni, ye shall become  
A theme for your descendants' choral songs,  
Such squadrons ye to battle shall lead forth  
Favoured by righteous Jove.

THE. Thy dread injunctions,  
Minerva, awful queen, will I obey :  
For I, while thou direct'st me, cannot err.  
I from Adrastus will exact that oath,  
Deign only thou to guide my steps aright,  
For to our city if thou prov'st a friend  
We shall enjoy blest safety.

CHOR. Let us go,  
Adrastus, and eternal friendship swear  
To Theseus and his city, for the toils  
They have endured our grateful reverence claim.



# HIPPOLYTUS.

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

VENUS.

HIPPOLYTUS.

ATTENDANTS OF HIPPOLYTUS.

OFFICER BELONGING TO THE  
PALACE.

CHORUS OF TRÆZENIAN DAMES.

NURSE.

PHÆDRA.

THESEUS.

MESSENGERS,

DIANA.

SCENE—BEFORE PITTHEUS' PALACE AT TRÆZENE.

VENUS.

My empire man confesses, and the name  
Of Venus echoes through heaven's wide expanse.  
Among all those who on the distant coast  
Of ocean dwell, and earth's remotest bounds  
Old Atlas' station who upholds the skies,  
Beholding the resplendent solar beams ;  
On them who to my power due homage pay  
Great honours I bestow, and to the dust  
Humble each proud contemner. E'en the race  
Of happy deities with pleasure view  
The reverence mortals yield them. Of these words  
Ere long will I display the truth : that son  
Of Theseus and the Amazonian dame,  
Hippolytus, by holy Pittheus taught,  
E'en he alone among all those who dwell  
Here in Træzene, of th' immortal powers  
Styles me the weakest, loathes the genial bed,  
Nor to the sacred nuptial yoke will bow :  
Apollo's sister, Dian, sprung from Jove,  
He worships, her the greatest he esteems  
Of all the gods, and ever in her groves

A favoured comrade of the virgin dwells,  
With his swift hounds the flying beasts of prey  
Expelling from their haunts, and aims at more  
Than human nature reaches. Him in this  
I envy not : why should I ? Yet shall vengeance  
This day o'ertake the miscreant : I have forged  
Each implement already, and there needs  
But little labour to effect his doom.  
For erst, on his arrival from the house  
Of Pittheus, in Pandion's land, to view  
The mystic rites, and in those mystic rites  
To be initiated, his father's wife,  
Illustrious Phædra, saw the prince, her heart  
At my behest love's dire contagion seized :  
And ere she came to this Træzenian coast,  
She, where Minerva's rock o'erlooks this land,  
To Venus reared a temple, for the youth  
Who in a foreign region dwelt, engrossed  
By amorous frenzy, and to future times  
Resolved this lasting monumental pile  
Of her unhappy passion to bequeath.  
But from Cecropia's realm since Theseus fled  
To expiate his pollution, with the blood  
Of Pallas' sons distained, and with his queen  
Sailed for this coast, to voluntary exile  
Submitting for one year, the wretched Phædra,  
Groaning and deeply smitten by the stings  
Of love, hath pined in silence, nor perceives  
One of her menial train whence this disease  
Invaded her. Yet of its full effect  
Must not her amorous malady thus fail :  
For I to Theseus am resolved to show  
The truth, no longer shall it rest concealed :  
Then will the father with his curses slay  
My youthful foe : for the reward on Theseus  
Conferred by Neptune, ruler of the waves,  
Was this : that thrice he to that god might sue  
For any gift, nor should he sue in vain.  
Phædra is noble, yet she too shall perish,



For I of such importance shall not hold  
 Her ruin as to spare those foes, on whom  
 I the severest vengeance will inflict,  
 That I may reassert my injured fame.  
 But hence must I retreat : for I behold  
 Hippolytus, this son of Theseus, comes,  
 Returning from the labours of the chase :  
 A numerous band of servants, on their prince  
 Attending, in the clamorous song unite  
 To celebrate Diana : for he knows not  
 That hell hath oped its gates, and he is doomed  
 After this day to view the sun no more. *[Exit VENUS.]*

## HIPPOLYTUS, ATTENDANTS.

HIP. Come on, my friends, attune your lays  
 To resound Diana's praise,  
 From the radiant fields of air  
 She listens to her votaries' prayer.

ATT. Awful queen enthroned above,  
 Hail thou progeny of Jove,  
 Virgin goddess, whom of yore  
 Latona to the Thunderer bore,  
 Thy matchless beauties far outshine  
 Each of those lovely maids divine,  
 Who fill with their harmonious choir  
 The domes of Heaven's immortal sire.  
 Hail, O thou whose charms excel  
 All nymphs that on Olympus dwell.

HIP. To deck thee, I this wreath, O goddess, bear,  
 Cropt from yon mead, o'er which no swain his flock  
 For pasture drives, nor hath the mower's steel  
 Despoiled its virgin herbage; 'midst each flower,  
 Which spring profusely scatters, there the bee  
 Roams unmolested, and religious awe  
 Waters the champaign with abundant springs :  
 They who owe nought to learning, but have gained  
 From nature wisdom such as never fails.  
 In their whole conduct, are by Heaven allowed  
 To cull these sweets, not so the wretch profane.

Vouchsafe, O dearest goddess, to receive  
 This braided fillet for thy golden hair,  
 From me a pious votary, who alone  
 Of all mankind am for thy worship meet,  
 For I with thee reside, with thee converse,  
 Hearing thy voice indeed, though I thy face  
 Have never seen. My life as it began  
 May I with spotless purity conclude !

OFFICER, HIPPOLYTUS.

OFF. My royal master (for the gods alone  
 Challenge the name of lord), will you receive  
 A servant's good advice ?

HIP. With joy ; else void  
 Of wisdom I to thee might justly seem.

OFF. Know you the law prescribed to man ?

HIP. The law !  
 I cannot guess the purport of thy question.

OFF. To loathe that pride which studies not to please.

HIP. Right : for what haughty man is not abhorred ?

OFF. Doth then an affable demeanour tend  
 To make us popular ?

HIP. This much avails,  
 And teaches us with ease to gain renown.

OFF. But think'st thou that among celestial powers  
 It bears an equal influence ?

HIP. Since the laws  
 By which we mortals act from Heaven derive  
 Their origin.

OFF. Why, then, an awful goddess  
 Neglect you to invoke ?

HIP. Whom ? Yet beware,  
 Lest thy tongue utter some imprudent word.

OFF. This Venus who is stationed o'er your gate.

HIP. Still chaste I at a distance her salute.

OFF. By mortals deemed illustrious she exacts  
 Your worship.

HIP. We select this god, that friend,  
 As suits our various tempers.

OFF. Were you wise,  
Wise as you ought, you might be truly happy.

HIP. I am not pleased with any god whose rites  
Demand nocturnal secresy.

OFF. My son,  
We ought to reverence the immortal powers.

HIP. Entering the palace, O my friends, prepare  
The viands, after a fatiguing chase  
Delicious is the banquet : tend my steeds,  
That, when I have refreshed myself with food,  
Them I with more convenience to the car  
May yoke and exercise : but as for this  
Thy Cyprian queen, to her I bid adieu.

[*Exeunt* HIPPOLYTUS and ATTENDANTS.]

OFF. Meantime (for the example of young men  
Must not be imitated), prompt to think,  
And hold such language as a servant ought,  
Before thy image I devoutly bend,  
O sovereign Venus, thee doth it behove  
To pardon the rash boy who, flushed with pride,  
Speaks foolishly : seem thou as if his words  
Had never reached thine ear : for sure the gods  
In wisdom should transcend man's grovelling race.

[*Exit* OFFICER.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. I.

A rock supplies, as we are told,  
In such abundance the exhaustless rill,  
That oft the virgins 'gainst its basis hold  
Their copious urns to fill.

One of our associate train  
Thither, in the limpid wave,  
Went, her purple vests to lave,  
Then hung them dripping on a cliff, to drain  
And imbibe the sunny gale :  
I from her first caught this tale :

## I. 2.

That with sickness faint, alone,  
 In yonder palace on her sleepless bed  
 Our queen reclines, she a thin veil hath thrown  
     Over her beauteous head ;  
 This the third revolving day,  
 Since, o'erpowered by lingering pains,  
 She from all nourishment abstains,  
 Wasting that lovely frame with slow decay ;  
     She thus her hidden griefs would end,  
 Thus to the silent grave descend.

## II. 1.

From some god this impulse springs ;  
 Sure Pan or Hecat  have fired thy brain,  
 Or awful Cybel  to vex thee brings  
     Her priests, a frantic train ;  
 Perhaps, exulting in the chase,  
 Thee Dictynna doth pursue,  
 For neglecting homage due  
 Her altar with the promised cates to grace,  
 She swiftly glides o'er mountain steep,  
 Fords the lake or billowy deep.

## II. 2.

Have another's witching charms  
 Seduced the monarch to a stol'n embrace ;  
 Doth then a harlot in thy Theseus' arms  
     The nuptial couch disgrace ?  
 Or from Cretan shores I ween  
 Some sailor crossed the billowy main,  
 Reached this hospitable plain,  
 And bore a doleful message to the queen :  
     Hence with deepest anguish pained  
 In her bed is she detained.

## III.

Some hidden grief with pregnant throes combined  
 Oft dwells upon the female mind,  
 Erst in my entrails raged this hidden smart :  
     Diana, that celestial maid,

Amid the pangs of childbirth wont to aid,  
 I then invoked, and she, whose dart  
 Pierces the hind, with tutelary care  
 Descended at her votary's prayer,  
 And with her brought each friendly power  
 Who guards our sex in that distressful hour.

But lo ! her aged nurse before the gates  
 Leads out the queen, over whose downcast brow  
 Care spreads a deeper cloud : my inmost soul  
 Burns with impatience to explore the grief  
 Which preys in secret on her fading charms.

PHÆDRA, NURSE, CHORUS.

NUR. Ye wretched mortals, who by loathed disease  
 Are visited ! What shall I do to aid thee,  
 Or what shall I omit ? The solar beams  
 Here mayst thou view, here find a cooling air.  
 For we without the palace doors have borne  
 The couch where sickening thou reclin'st. Thy talk  
 Was all of coming hither : but in haste  
 Back to thy chamber soon wilt thou return :  
 For thou, each moment altering, tak'st delight  
 In nothing long ; the present quickly grows  
 Unpleasing, somewhat absent thou esteem'st  
 More grateful. Better were it to be sick  
 Than tend the lingering patient , for the first  
 Is but a simple ill, the last unites  
 The mind's more pungent griefs and manual toil.  
 But the whole life of man abounds with woe,  
 Our labours never cease . yet sure there is,  
 There is a blest futurity, concealed  
 Behind thick night's impenetrable veil.  
 We therefore seem mistaken, when we dote  
 On yonder sun, that o'er this nether earth  
 Displays its glittering beams, because we know  
 No other life, nor have the realms beneath  
 Been e'er laid open : but by tales, devised  
 To cheat, at random are we borne away.

PHÆ. Lift up my body, prop my sinking head,

Each limb, my friends, has lost its strength ; sustain,  
O ye who on your wretched mistress tend,  
My hands, which hang quite motionless : away  
With cumbrous ornaments, the caul remove,  
And let these tresses o'er my shoulders flow.

NUR. Daughter, be cheerful, and compose to rest  
Thy languid frame : thou, if with patience armed  
And generous fortitude of soul, wilt bear  
Thy sickness better. For mankind are doomed  
By fate to struggle with a load of ills.

PHÆ. How shall I drink at yonder limpid fount  
The cooling waters, and 'midst grassy vales  
Recline my wearied limbs beneath the shade  
Of spreading alders ?

NUR. What confused discourse  
Escapes thee ? Utter not before the crowd  
Such words as closely border on distraction.

PHÆ. Lead to yon mount ; I tread the piny grove,  
Where the staunch hounds along the mazy track  
Follow their prey, and, lightly bounding, seize  
The dappled stag. Ye gods, with my shrill voice  
What joy to rouse them, while my auburn hair  
Floats in the wanton gale, and brandish round  
In my firm hand Thessalia's pointed lance.

NUR. Whence, O my child, proceed these anxious cares ?  
What business with the chase hast thou ? Why thirst  
For the pure fountain, while a constant spring,  
Whose waters thou mayst drink, flows hard beside  
The citadel ?

PHÆ. Dread Artemis, thou goddess  
Presiding o'er yon sacred lake, who aid'st  
The fleet-hoofed racer, bear me o'er thy fields  
To tame Hennesia's coursers.

NUR. Why repeat  
These incoherent words ? But now to climb  
The mountain's lofty summit was thy wish  
That thou might'st hunt, then on the sandy beach  
To drive thy steeds. O for an abler seer  
Who can expound what god with iron curb  
Subdues my daughter and perverts thy soul.



PHÆ. Ah, what have I been doing? Wretched me!  
 From my right senses whither have I wandered?  
 Into this frenzy I, alas! am plunged  
 By some malignant demon. Yet once more  
 Cover my head. The words which I have spoken  
 Fill me with conscious shame, and many a tear  
 Streams down my cheeks; I feel the rising blush,  
 And know not where to turn these eyes. The pang,  
 When reason reassumes her throne, is great.  
 Though madness be an evil: yet 'tis best  
 When in that state unconscious we expire.

NUR. Thee thus I cover: but ah, when will death  
 Cover my body? A long life hath taught me  
 Full many a useful lesson. Friendships formed  
 With moderation for the human race  
 Are most expedient, and not such as pierce  
 The marrow of their souls: with the same ease  
 As they the sacred chords entwine they ought  
 To slacken them at will. But for one heart  
 To suffer twofold anguish, as I grieve  
 For my unhappy mistress, is a load  
 Beyond endurance. 'Tis remarked, there springs  
 From all sensations too intense, more pain  
 Than pleasure, and our health they oft impair.  
 A foe to all excess, I rather praise  
 This sentence, "Not too much of anything;"  
 And in my judgment will the wise concur.

CHOR. Thou aged dame, who hast with steadfast zeal  
 Attended royal Phædra, we observe  
 What agonies she suffers, but discern not  
 The nature of her malady; and wish  
 By thee to be instructed whence it springs.

NUR. I know not; for no answer will she give  
 To my inquiries.

CHOR. Nor the source whence rise  
 Her sufferings?

NUR. Your account and mine agree:  
 For she on all these points remains still dumb.

CHOR. How faint and wasted seems that graceful  
 form!

NUR. No wonder : since she tasted any food  
This day's the third.

CHOR. By Ate's wrath o'ercome,  
Or does she strive to die ?

NUR. To die she strives,  
And by such abstinence her life would end.

CHOR. Strange is thy tale : this cannot please her lord.

NUR. From him she hides her sickness, and pretends  
To be in health.

CHOR. If in her face he look,  
Can he not read it ?

NUR. To a foreign land  
From hence, alas ! he went, nor yet returns.

CHOR. Why art thou not more urgent to explore  
This malady, these wanderings of her soul ?

NUR. Without effect all methods have I tried :  
Yet with the self-same zeal will I persist,  
That ye may testify the strong attachment  
Which I to my unhappy queen have borne.  
O my loved daughter, let us both forget  
What we have said : be thou more mild, that gloom  
Which overcasts thy brow, those harsh resolves,  
Lay thou aside, and if to thee erewhile  
I spoke amiss, in milder accents now  
Will I express myself ; if under pains  
Thou labour, such as may not be revealed,  
To succour thee thy female friends are here.  
But if the other sex may know thy sufferings,  
Let the physician try his healing art.  
In either case, why silent ? It behoves thee,  
O daughter, to reply ; and, if I speak  
Unwittingly, reprove me, if aright,  
With wholesome admonition, O concur.  
Say somewhat : cast one look this way. Ah me !  
But listen to this truth, though more perverse  
Than ocean's waves : thy children, if thou die,  
Will be deserted, and can have no share  
In the paternal house : for his first queen,  
That martial Amazonian dame, hath borne

Their sire a son to lord it o'er thy race,  
Though illegitimate, with liberal views  
Trained up from infancy, him well thou know'st,  
Hippolytus.

PHÆ. Ah me !

NUR. Doth then that name  
Affect thee ?

PHÆ. You have ruined me ; peace, peace :  
Be silent, I conjure you by the gods,  
Speak of that man no more.

NUR. With open eyes,  
And senses now restored, canst thou neglect  
Thy children's interest, nor preserve thy life ?

PHÆ. I love my children : but another storm  
Assails me.

NUR. O my daughter, sure thy hands  
Are undefiled with blood ?

PHÆ. My hands are pure,  
Yet doth pollution harbour in my soul.

NUR. Proceeds this mischief from some foe ?

PHÆ. A friend—  
An unconsenting friend, alas !—destroys me,  
Nor do I perish through my own consent.

NUR. Hath Theseus wronged thee ?

PHÆ. May I ne'er be found  
To have injured him !

NUR. Then what important cause  
Precipitates thy death ?

PHÆ. Indulge my error ;  
For I 'gainst you offend not.

NUR. My assent  
To such request would be a breach of duty.

PHÆ. What mean you by this violence ? Why hang  
Upon my hand ?

NUR. In suppliant posture thus,  
Thus to thy knees for ever will I cling.

PHÆ. If you, unhappy woman, heard my woes,  
You would partake them.

NUR. What severer woe

Can possibly befall me than the loss  
Of thee, my honoured mistress? For I see  
Thou art resolved to perish.

PHÆ. This affair

To me will bring renown.

NUR. Why then conceal

Those merits into which I wish t' inquire?

PHÆ. Me virtuous motives prompt to deeds of shame.

NUR. Reveal those motives, hence shalt thou appear  
More noble.

PHÆ. O depart, I by the gods

Conjure you, and release my hand.

NUR. Not thus.

If this request from me thou still withhold.

PHÆ. I will comply ; for you, my aged suppliant,  
Such due respect I entertain.

NUR. In silence

Will I attend : now is it thine to speak.

PHÆ. My wretched mother, what a love was thine !

NUR. Why shouldst thou name her passion for that bull?

PHÆ. And you, my hapless sister, Bacchus' wife—

NUR. What ails thee? Why dost thou recount the shame  
Of these thy kindred?

PHÆ. But of me the third.

How wretched is the fate !

NUR.                   Thou strik'st me dumb.

Where will this history end?

PHÆ. Thence spring my woes,

Woes of no recent date.

NUR. I understand

As little of the secret I would learn,

As if thou still wert silent.

PHÆ. How should you

Divine my thoughts so as t' anticipate

What I would speak?

NUR. No prophetess am I,

These mysteries with precision to unfold.

PHÆ. Say what is that which men entitle love?

NUR. Love is a mixture formed of sweetest joys  
And torments most severe.

PHÆ. The last of these  
Have I experienced.  
NUR. Daughter, ha, what saidst thou?  
For whom thus burn'st thou with forbidden fires?  
PHÆ. Who is that son of th' Amazonian dame?  
NUR. Mean'st thou Hippolytus?  
PHÆ. By you, not me,  
That name was uttered.

NUR. Ah, what words are these?  
How hast thou ruined me! This, O my friends,  
Is not to be endured; I cannot live  
To bear it: to these eyes the lamp of day  
Grows odious; the encumbrance of this body  
Will I cast off, nor on such tenure hold  
A being I abhor. And now farewell  
For ever! Count me dead. Chaste matrons yield  
With some reluctance, yet to lawless love  
At length they yield. Venus is then no goddess,  
But somewhat more than goddess: for my queen  
And me, and this whole house, hath she destroyed.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Too clear thou heard'st the royal dame confess  
The horrors which her bosom stain:  
O had I died ere this severe distress  
Shook reason's seat and fired her frantic brain!  
Thy sorrows are by Heaven decreed.  
Ye miseries on which mortals feed!  
Thy shame lies open to the sun,  
And thou, my royal mistress, art undone.  
Short is thy date:  
What cruel fate,  
Such as with life alone can end,  
Shall to the grave thy steps attend!  
I see, I see through time's deep gloom,  
These mansions fall by Venus' doom:  
Such revolution is at hand,  
Thee, hapless Cretan nymph, the fates demand.

PHÆ O ye Træzenian matrons, who reside  
On this extremity of the domains  
Where Pelops ruled ; through many a wakeful night  
Have I considered whence mankind became  
Thus universally corrupt, and deem  
That to the nature of the human soul  
Our frailties are not owing, for to form  
Sound judgments is a privilege enjoyed  
By many. But the matter in this light  
Ought to be viewed ; well knowing what is good,  
We practise not. Some do amiss through sloth,  
Others to virtue's rigid laws prefer  
Their pleasures ; for with various pleasures life  
Is furnished ; conversation lengthened out  
Beyond due bounds ; ease, that bewitching pest  
And shame, of which there are two kinds—one leads  
To virtue, by the other is a house  
Involved in woe ; but if the proper season  
For our expressing shame were ascertained  
With due precision, things which bear one name  
Could not have differed thus. When in my mind  
I had revolved these thoughts, to me it seemed  
As if no magic had sufficient power  
To warp the steadfast purpose of my soul.  
Here I to you the progress of my heart  
Will next unfold, since love with his keen shafts  
These wounds inflicted ; studious how to bear,  
As it became me, this abhorred disease,  
I from that time have by a wary silence  
Concealed the pangs I suffer. For the tongue  
Must not be trusted, well can it suggest  
To others wholesome counsels when they err,  
Though to its owner oft it proves the source  
Of grievous ills. I next this amorous rage  
With firmness was determined to endure,  
And conquer it by chastity. At length,  
When all these sage expedients proved too weak  
O'er Venus to prevail, my best resource  
*I thought was death : none hath a right to blame*



These counsels. May my virtues be conspicuous ;  
But when I act amiss, I would avoid  
Too many witnesses. That on such deed,  
And e'en the inclination to transgress,  
Disgrace attends, I knew, and was aware  
That if from honour's paths a woman swerve  
She to the world is odious. On her head  
Be tenfold ruin heaped who first presumed  
To introduce adulterers, and defile  
The nuptial couch ; from those of nobler birth  
Begun this evil through our sex to spread.  
For when foul deeds please those who erst have borne  
A virtuous character, to souls depraved  
They recommend themselves beneath a form  
Of seeming excellence. Those too I hate  
Whose words are modest, but their lives impure  
In private. O thou goddess, who didst rise  
From ocean, lovely Venus, how can these  
Without a blush their injured lords behold ?  
Tremble they not, lest their accomplice darkness,  
Or lest the vaulted roofs of their abodes,  
Should send forth an indignant voice ? This robs  
Your queen of life, my friends : so shall the charge  
Of having shamed my lord, my children shamed,  
Be never urged against me : free and blest  
With liberty of speech, in the famed city  
Of Athens, they shall dwell, maternal fame  
Transmitted for their portion. E'en the man  
Of dauntless courage dwindles to a slave  
If conscious that his mother or his sire  
Have acted wickedly. One only good,  
A just and virtuous soul, the wise affirm,  
Strives for pre-eminence with life : for time,  
At length, when like some blooming nymph her charms  
Contemplating, he to our eyes holds up  
His mirror, every guilty wretch displays.  
Among that number may I ne'er be found !  
CHOR. Wherever we discern it, O how fair  
Is modesty, that source of bright renown !

NUR. O queen, at first, an instantaneous shock,  
I, from the history of thy woes, received :  
Now am I sensible my fears were groundless.  
But frequently the second thoughts of man  
Are more discreet ; for there is nothing strange,  
Nought, in thy sufferings, foreign to the course  
Of nature : thee the goddess in her rage  
Invades. Thou lov'st. And why should this surprise ?  
Many as well as thee have done the same.  
Art thou resolved to cast thy life away  
Because thou lov'st ? How wretched were the state  
Of those who love, and shall hereafter love,  
If death must thence ensue ! For though too strong  
To be withstood, when she with all her might  
Assails us, Venus gently visits those  
Who yield ; but if she light on one who soars  
With proud and overweening views too high,  
As thou mayst well conceive, to utter scorn  
Such she exposes ; through the boundless tracts  
Of air she glides, and reigns 'midst ocean's waves :  
All things from her their origin derive,  
'Tis she that in each breast the genial seeds  
Of potent love infuses, and from love  
Descends each tribe that fills the peopled earth.  
They who with ancient writings have conversed,  
And ever dwell among the tuneful Nine,  
Know how to Theban Semele's embrace  
Flew amorous Jove, how bright Aurora stole  
Young Cephalus, and placed among the gods  
The object of her passion : yet in Heaven  
They still reside, where unabashed they meet  
Their kindred gods ; those gods, because they feel  
A sympathetic wound, I deem, indulge  
Their weakness : and wilt thou refuse to bear  
Like imperfections ? Nature on these terms  
Decreed thou from thy father shouldst receive  
Thy being : look for other gods, or yield  
Submission to these laws. Hast thou observed,  
*How many husbands, men who are endued*

With a superior wisdom, when they see  
 The nuptial bed by secret lust defiled,  
 Appear as though they saw not : and how oft  
 The fathers, if their sons transgress, connive  
 At their unhappy passion ? To conceal  
 Unseemly actions is no trifling part  
 Of human wisdom ; nor should man his life  
 Form with too great precision ; for the roof,  
 The covering from the storm, the builder leaves  
 Less fair, less highly finished. If immersed  
 In evils great as those thou hast described,  
 How canst thou hope to 'scape ? But if thy virtues,  
 Since thou art only human, far exceed  
 Thy failings, it is well with thee : desist,  
 O my loved daughter, from thy evil purpose,  
 And cease to utter these reproachful words :  
 For there is nought but contumelious pride  
 In thy endeavour to be yet more perfect  
 Than the immortal gods : endure thy passion  
 With fortitude, since 'twas the will divine  
 That thou shouldst love : but give a prosperous turn,  
 If possible, to thy disease. For songs  
 There are with magic virtues fraught, and words  
 Which soothe the soul : hence an effectual cure  
 May be obtained : in such discovery man  
 Would long in vain be busied, to our sex  
 If no spontaneous stratagem occur.

CHOR. Though her advice, amid thy present woes,  
 O Phædra, be more useful, I applaud  
 Thy better purpose : yet applause unsought  
 May haply give offence, and to thine ear  
 Convey sounds harsher than her specious words.

PHÆ. 'Tis this, e'en this, too plausible a tongue,  
 Which states administered by wholesome laws,  
 And houses of the mighty, hath o'erthrown :  
 Nor should we utter what delights the ear,  
 But for renown a generous thirst instil.

NUR. What means this grave harangue ? No need  
 hast thou

Of well-turned phrases, but the man thou lov'st.  
 Look out with speed for those who, in clear terms,  
 Will to the prince thy real state unfold.  
 But had not such calamities assailed  
 Thy life, and thou remained a virtuous dame,  
 I ne'er, to gratify thy wild desires,  
 Would have enticed thee to a lawless bed :  
 But now this great exertion, to preserve  
 Thy life, is such as envy could not blame.

PHÆ. Detested speech ! Will you ne'er close that  
 mouth,  
 And the ungrateful repetition cease  
 Of words so infamous ?

NUR.                               What I proposed,  
 Though culpable it be, far better suits  
 Thy interests than severer virtue's rules ;  
 For indiscretion, if it save thy life,  
 Hath far more merit than that empty name  
 Thy pride would make thee perish to retain.

PHÆ. I by the gods conjure you to desist  
 (For you, in terms too plausible, express  
 Things that are infamous), nor in this strain  
 Attempt to prove that, yielding up my soul  
 To love, I shall act right : for if you paint  
 Foul deeds with specious colours, in the snares  
 From which I now am 'scaping I afresh  
 Shall be entangled.

NUR.                               Hadst thou earlier formed  
 These rigid notions, thou shouldst ne'er have erred.  
 But since this cannot be, my counsel hear :  
 From thee this second favour I request ;  
 I in my house have philtres to assuage  
 The pangs of love (which but just now occurred  
 To my remembrance) ; these, nor to disgrace  
 Exposing thee, nor of such strong effect  
 As to impair thy reason, yet will work  
 On this thy malady a perfect cure,  
 Unless through mere perverseness thou refuse  
 To make th' experiment : for we from him

Thou lov'st, must either take a sign, a word,  
Or fragment of his robe, to join two hearts  
In mutual love.

PHÆ. But is this wondrous medicine  
You recommend an ointment or a potion?

NUR. I cannot tell. Search for a cure, my child,  
And not instruction.

PHÆ. Greatly do I fear  
Your wisdom will be carried to excess.

NUR. Know then thou art disposed to be alarmed  
At everything. But whence arise these terrors?

PHÆ. Aught that hath passed, lest you to Theseus' son  
Should mention.

NUR. Peace, O daughter, be it mine  
To manage this aright : I only sue,  
Benignant goddess, sprung from ocean's waves,  
That thou, O Venus, wouldst my projects aid.  
But to our friends within, will it suffice  
The rest of my intentions to unfold.

[Exit NURSE.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

O love, whose sweet delusions fly,  
Instilling passion through the eye,  
And steal upon the heart,  
Never thus my soul engage,  
Come not with immoderate rage,  
Nor choose thy keenest dart :  
Not the lightning's awful glare,  
Not the thunderbolts of Jove,  
Such destructive terrors bear,  
As strongly vibrate in the shafts of love.

I. 2.

On Alpheus' banks in vain, in vain,  
Or at Apollo's Delphic fane,  
Whole herds of slaughtered kine  
Doth Greece present, if we neglect

Venus' son, who claims respect,  
 The genial couch his shrine :  
 With the vengeance of a foe,  
 If the deity invades,  
 On man he pours forth every woe,  
 And crowds with victims all the Stygian shades.

## II. 1.

By Venus was Cechalia's maid,  
 Of hymeneal bonds afraid,  
 Consigned in days of yore,  
 Like a wild filly to the yoke,  
 Espoused 'midst horrid slaughter, smoke,  
 And rites profaned with gore ;  
 Indignant was the virgin led,  
 Streaming with dishevelled hair,  
 To the stern Alcides' bed,  
 While bridal shouts were mingled with despair.

## II. 2.

Unite, thou sacred Theban wall,  
 And fountain famed from Dirce's fall,  
 To witness with what might  
 Resistless Cytherea came,  
 Brandishing ethereal flame ;  
 To everlasting night,  
 She, beauteous Semele consigned,  
 Who to Jove Lyæus bore :  
 Her breath's a pestilential wind,  
 Our heads she like the bee still hovers o'er.

PHÆ. Restrain your tongues : we, O my friends, are  
 ruined.

CHOR. O Phædra, say what terrible event  
 In thy abode hath happened ?

PHÆ. Not a word  
 Must now be uttered : I would hear these sounds  
 Which issue from the palace.

CHOR. We are silent :  
 Yet must this prelude sure denote some ill.



PHÆ. Wretch that I am ! How dreadful are my woes !

CHOR. What shrieks, alas ! are these—what clamorous sounds

By thee now uttered ? Speak, my hapless queen,  
What sudden rumour terrifies thy soul ?

PHÆ. We are undone, but stand ye at these doors  
And listen to the uproar raised within.

CHOR. Thou to those portals art already close,  
And in the voice which issues from the palace  
Hast a great interest, therefore say what ill  
Hath happened.

PHÆ. Stern Hippolytus, the son  
Of that intrepid Amazonian dame,  
In loudest tone full many a horrid curse  
Is uttering 'gainst my servant.

CHOR. A mere noise  
Is all I hear, yet cannot I collect  
A single word distinctly : passing through  
These doors their sound hath surely reached thine ear.

PHÆ. He plainly calls her harbinger of vice,  
And the betrayer of her sovereign's bed.

CHOR. Wretch that I am ! Thou, O my dearest queen,  
Hast been betrayed. What counsel can I give ?  
The mystery is laid open ; thou art ruined—  
Utterly ruined.

PHÆ. Ah !

CHOR. Thy friends have proved  
Unfaithful to their trust.

PHÆ. To her I owe  
My ruin, who, though prompted by her love,  
Unwisely my calamity disclosed,  
Hoping the desperate malady to heal.

CHOR. What part, alas ! remains for thee to act,  
Surrounded by inevitable mischiefs ?

PHÆ. But one expedient for my present ills  
I know ; their only cure is instant death.

HIPPOLYTUS, NURSE, PHÆDRA, CHORUS.

HIP. Earth, mother of us all, and sun, whose beams

Diffuse their splendour wide, what words, unfit  
For any tongue to utter, reached these ears !

NUR. Peace, O my son, lest some one hear thy voice.

HIP. I cannot bury such atrocious crimes  
As these in silence.

NUR. By that fair right hand,  
Thee I implore.

HIP. Profane not by your touch  
My garment.

NUR. Grovelling at thy knees, I crave  
Thou wouldst not ruin me.

HIP. Why wish to check  
My tongue, if you, as you pretend, have said  
Nought that is blamable ?

NUR. Yet must my words  
On no account be published

HIP. To the world  
What's virtuous may with honour be revealed.

NUR. Forget not thus the reverence, O my son,  
Due to a solemn oath.

HIP. Although my tongue  
Hath sworn, my soul is from the compact free.

NUR. O thou rash youth, what mean'st thou ? Art thou  
bent

On the destruction of thy friends ?

HIP. I hold  
The friendships of the wicked in abhorrence.

NUR. Forgive me : error is the lot of man.

HIP. By a fair semblance to deceive the world,  
Wherefore, O Jove, beneath the solar beams  
That evil, woman, didst thou cause to dwell ?  
For if it was thy will the human race  
Should multiply, this ought not by such means  
To be effected : better in thy fane  
Each votary, on presenting brass or steel,  
Or massive ingots of resplendent gold,  
Proportioned to his offering, might from thee  
Obtain a race of sons, and under roofs  
Which genuine freedom visits, unannoyed

By women, live. But to receive this worst  
Of evils, now no sooner are our doors  
Thrown open than the riches of our house  
We utterly exhaust. How great a pest  
Is woman this one circumstance displays ;  
The very father who begot and nurtured,  
A plenteous dower advancing, sends her forth,  
That of such loathed incumbrance he may rid  
His mansions : but the hapless youth, who takes  
This noxious inmate to his bed, exults  
While he caparisons a worthless image,  
In gorgeous ornaments and tissued vests  
Squandering his substance. With some noble race  
He who by wedlock a connection forms  
Is bound by hard necessity to keep  
The loathsome consort ; if perchance he gain  
One who is virtuous sprung from worthless sires,  
He by the good compensates for the ills  
Attending such a union. Happier he,  
Unvexed by these embarrassments, whose bride  
Inactive through simplicity, and mild,  
To his abode is like a statue fixed.  
All female wisdom doth my soul abhor.  
Never may the aspiring dame, who grasps  
At knowing more than to her sex belongs,  
Enter my house : for in the subtle breast  
Are deeper stratagems by Venus sown :  
But she whose reason is too weak to frame  
A plot, from amorous frailties lives secure.  
No female servant ever should attend  
The married dame, she rather ought to dwell  
Among wild beasts, who are by nature mute,  
Lest she should speak to any, or receive  
Their answers. But the wicked now devise  
Mischief in secret chambers, while abroad  
Their confidants promote it : thus, vile wretch,  
In privacy you came, with me to form  
An impious treaty for surrendering up  
My royal father's unpolluted bed.

Soon from such horrors in the limpid spring  
 My ears will I make pure: how could I rush  
 Into the crime itself, when, having heard  
 Only the name made mention of, I feel  
 As though I some defilement thence had caught?  
 Base woman, know 'tis my religion saves  
 Your forfeit life, for by a solemn oath  
 If to the gods I had not unawares  
 Engaged myself, I ne'er would have refrained  
 From stating these transactions to my sire;  
 But now, while Theseus in a foreign land  
 Continues, hence will I depart, and keep  
 The strictest silence. But I soon shall see,  
 When with my injured father I return,  
 How you and your perfidious queen will dare  
 To meet his eyes, then fully shall I know  
 Your impudence, of which I now have made  
 This first essay. Perdition seize you both:  
 For with unsatiated abhorrence, still  
 'Gainst woman will I speak, though some object  
 To my repeating always the same charge:  
 For they are ever uniformly wicked:  
 Let any one then prove the female sex  
 Possest of chastity, or suffer me,  
 As heretofore, against them to inveigh.

[Exit HIPPOLYTUS.]

CHORUS.

ANTISTROPHE.

O wretched woman's inauspicious fate!  
 What arts, what projects can we find,  
 To extricate ourselves, ere yet too late,  
 From our distress, or how the snare unbind?  
 PHÆ. Just are the sufferings I endure:  
 Thou earth and sun, my anguish cure.  
 How, O my friends, shall I avoid  
 The stroke of fate before I am destroyed?  
 Or how conceal  
 The pangs I feel?

What tutelary god is near,  
 What friendly mortal will appear  
 To aid me in this hour of shame?  
 Afflictions and an evil name  
 The remnant of my life must vex :

I now am the most wretched of my sex.

CHOR. Alas ! all now is over ; O my queen,  
 The stratagems thy hapless servant framed  
 Fail of success, and desperate are thy fortunes.

PHÆ. O villanous destroyer of your friends,  
 How have you ruined me ! May Jove my grandsire  
 Uproot you in his vengeance from the earth,  
 And smite with thunderbolts that perjured head.  
 When I your baleful stratagems foresaw,  
 How oft did I enjoin you to conceal  
 That fatal truth, from whose discovery spring  
 The torments I endure : but you the secret  
 Contained not, hence with an unspotted fame  
 I cannot die, but some fresh scheme must forge.  
 For this rash youth, his soul with anger fired,  
 Will to his father my offence relate,  
 Inform the aged Pittheus of my woes,  
 And with this history, to my foul reproach,  
 Fill the whole world. May just perdition seize  
 Both you and all who by dishonest means  
 Their unconsenting friends are prompt to aid.

NUR. Thou, O my royal mistress, mayst condemn  
 The fault I have committed : for thy griefs  
 Are so severe that they awhile o'ercome  
 Thy better judgment. But wouldst thou admit  
 My answer, I could make one ; thee I nurtured,  
 And in thy happiness an interest feel.  
 But searching for a medicine to remove  
 Thy sickness, what I least could wish I found.  
 Success had stamped me wise : for by events  
 Are our opinions influenced.

PHÆ. Is it just,  
 And satisfactory, thus first to wound,  
 And then dispute with me ?





## CHORUS.

## ODE.

## I. I.

To where yon rock o'erhangs the main  
Waft me, ye gods, thence bid me spring,  
Transformed into a bird, on vigorous wing  
Through trackless ether mid the feathered train :  
With rapid pinions would I soar  
On high above the Adriatic shore,  
And Po's impetuous stream,  
Fixed on whose banks that virgin choir,  
Who spring from an immortal sire,  
Intent on the same dolorous theme,  
Still weep for Phaeton's untimely end,  
While 'midst the purple tide their amber tears descend.

## II. 2.

On to those coasts would I proceed  
Where the Hesperides their song  
Attune ; no mariner can thence prolong  
The voyage, for, his daring bark t' impede,  
Neptune those hallowed bounds maintains,  
Where Atlas with unwearied toil sustains  
The heavens' incumbent load ;  
And from a never-failing spring  
Ambrosia's streams their tribute bring,  
Watering those chambers, Jove's abode :  
There the glad soil its choicest gifts supplies  
Obedient to the reign of happy deities.

## II. 1.

Across yon hoarse resounding main,  
O bark of Crete, those hastier gales,  
Which caught the snowy canvas of thy sails,  
Conveyed my mistress, but conveyed in vain ;  
By fate from prosperous mansions torn,  
To nuptial rites unhallowed was she borne,  
And scenes of future shame :  
For surely from her native land,

To the renowned Athenian strand,  
 She with a luckless omen came ;  
 Though, to the shore their twisted cables bound,  
 With joy the sailors leaped on fair Munychia's ground.

## II. 2.

Her strength in lingering sickness spent,  
 Hence is she ordained to prove  
 How great the tortures of unlawful love,  
 By the command of angry Venus sent,  
 And after struggling long in vain,  
 Defeated by intolerable pain,  
 Her snowy neck around,  
 To bind that galling noose, resolves,  
 Which from her bridal roofs devolves,  
 Awed by the heaven-inflicted wound :  
 Choosing to perish thus with glory blest,  
 She, cruel love expels, the soul's tyrannic pest.

## MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Ho ! ho ! All ye who near the palace stand,  
 With speed come hither ; by the fatal cord,  
 Our queen, the wife of Theseus, is destroyed.

CHOR. The deed, alas ! is done. My royal mistress  
 Suspended in the noose is now no more.

MES. Why are ye not more swift ? Will no one bring  
 The sharpened steel, that, with its aid, this instant  
 The bandage we may sever from her neck ?

1st SEMICHOR. What shall we do ? Were it not best, my  
 friends,  
 To rush into the palace, and our queen  
 Loose from the knot which her own hands have tied ?  
 2nd SEMICHOR. But why do the young servants, in this hour  
 Of woe, absent themselves ? To be too busy  
 Is never safe.

MES. Extend the hapless body ;  
 Unwelcome office to the lords I serve. [*Exit* MESSENGER.]

CHOR. From what I hear, this miserable dame  
 Hath left the world : for they are stretching forth  
 Her corse as one who is already dead.

THESEUS, CHORUS.

THE. O woman, know ye what loud voice is that  
Within the palace? From the menial train  
Of damsels, shrieks most grievous reached my ear.  
None of my household, opening wide the gates,  
Deign to receive me with auspicious words  
On my return from the prophetic shrine.  
Hath aught befall'n the venerable Pittheus?  
What though he be already far advanced  
Into the vale of years, yet would his death  
These mansions with a general sorrow fill.

CHOR. Fate in its march, O Theseus, hath not pierced  
The aged : they who in the bloom of youth  
Are now cut off your sorrows will demand.

THE. Ah me ! Hath cruel death then torn away  
One of my sons ?

CHOR. They live, while breathless lies  
Their mother ; and most piteous was her end.

THE. What saidst thou ? Is my dearest Phædra dead ?  
Through what mischance ?

CHOR. She tied the fatal noose.

THE. Had grief congealed her blood ? Or was she  
urged

To this by some calamitous event ?

CHOR. We only know the fact : for to the palace  
Am I just come, O Theseus, that with yours  
My sorrows I may mingle.

THE. Round these brows  
Why do I wear a garland, but to show  
That I the oracle in luckless hour  
Have visited ? Unbar those doors, my servants,  
Open them wide, that I the wretched corse  
Of my dear wife may view, who by her death  
Hath ruined me.

[*The palace doors are opened, and the body of PHÆDRA  
is discovered, with a veil thrown over it.*]

CHOR. Thy woes, unhappy queen,  
Were dreadful ; yet thou such a deed hast wrought

As in confusion this whole house will plunge :  
 Presumptuous, violent, unnatural death  
 By thine own hand inflicted : for, ah ! who—  
 Who but thyself was author of thy fall ?

THE. Wretch that I am ! How many and how  
 great

Are my afflictions ? But of all the ills  
 Which I have felt, this last is most severe.  
 Me and these mansions with what terrors armed,  
 O fortune, dost thou visit ! From some fiend  
 This unforeseen dishonour takes its rise.  
 A life like mine is not to be endured,  
 And worse than death itself : for I so vast  
 An ocean of calamity behold,  
 That I can never hope to swim to land,  
 Or stem these overwhelming waves of woe.  
 Thee how shall I accost, or in what terms  
 Sufficiently deplore thy wretched fate ?  
 Swift as a bird 'scaped from the fowler's hand  
 Hence hast thou vanished with impetuous flight,  
 To the domains of sullen Pluto borne.  
 Grievous, alas ! most grievous are these woes.  
 But from some ancient stores of wrath, reserved  
 By vengeful Heaven to punish the misdeeds  
 Of a progenitor, I sure derive  
 This great calamity.

CHOR. Not you alone  
 Have such afflictions visited, O king ;  
 You but in common with a thousand mourners—  
 Have lost the noble partner of your bed.

THE. Under earth's deepest caverns would I dwell,  
 Amid the shades of everlasting night,  
 A wretch best numbered with the silent dead,  
 Now I, alas ! for ever am bereft  
 Of thy loved converse ; for thou hast destroyed  
 Me rather than thyself. Who will inform me  
 Whence death, with ruthless destiny combined,  
 Thy vitals reached ? Can any one disclose  
 The real fact ; or doth this palace harbour  
 A menial swarm in vain ? For thee, for thee,

Alas, I grieve ! What sorrows of my house,  
 Too great to be supported or expressed,  
 Are these which I have witnessed ! But I perish ;  
 These mansions are a desert, and my sons  
 Have lost their mother.

CHOR.                   Thou hast left, hast left  
 Thy friends, thou dearest and thou best of women,  
 Whom the resplendent sun or glimmering moon  
 E'er visited in her nocturnal round.  
 O my unhappy, my unhappy queen !  
 This house what dreadful evils have befallen !  
 Thy fate bedews these swimming eyes with tears ;  
 But, shuddering, to the sequel of our woes  
 Already I look forward.

THE.                   Ha ! what means  
 The letter which she clasps in her dear hand,  
 What fresh intelligence can it contain ?  
 Hath the deceased here written a request  
 For aught that to the marriage bed pertains,  
 And her sons' welfare ? Thou pale shade, rely  
 On this assurance, that no other dame  
 The widowed couch of Theseus shall ascend,  
 Or enter these abodes. Yet with such force  
 These well-known characters the golden ring  
 Of her who is no more hath here impressed  
 Allure me, that the seal I will burst open,  
 And learn what charge to me she would convey.

CHOR. Some god, alas ! hath in succession heaped  
 Evil on evil : such my fate, that life  
 Will be no longer any life to me  
 After this deed of horror. I pronounce  
 The house of my devoted kings o'erthrown,  
 And now no more a house. Yet, O ye gods,  
 This family, if possible forbear  
 To crush, and listen to my fervent vow.  
 Yet, like the soothsayer, my foreboding soul  
 An evil omen views.

THE.                   To my past woes,  
 What woes, alas ! are added, far too great  
 To be endured or uttered ! Wretched me !

CHOR. What fresh event is this? Speak, if the secret  
To me you can disclose.

THE. With loudest voice,  
The letter echoes such atrocious crimes  
As are not to be borne. To 'scape this load  
Of misery, whither, whither shall I fly?  
For I, alas! am utterly undone.  
What strains of horror have these wretched eyes  
Beheld, in that portentous scroll expressed!

CHOR. All that is terrible your words announce.

THE. Within the door of my indignant lips  
No longer thus will I contain a deed  
Of unexampled guilt. O city, city!  
Hippolytus with brutal force hath dared  
To violate my bed, and set at nought  
Jove's awful eye. O Neptune, O my sire,  
Since thou hast firmly promised that thou thrice  
Wouldst grant me what I prayed for; now fulfil  
One vow, and slay my son, nor let him 'scape  
This single day, if thou with me design  
To ratify the compact thou hast made.

CHOR. Recall that imprecation to the gods:  
For you, O king, your error will perceive;  
Attend to my advice.

THE. These ears are closed:  
Moreover I will drive him from the land;  
For of these twofold fates, or this or that  
Must smite him; Neptune, when he hears my curses,  
Will plunge the miscreant to the shades of hell;  
Else, cast forth from this region, and ordained  
To wander in some foreign land, a life  
Of the profoundest misery shall he drag.

CHOR. Behold how seasonably your son himself,  
Hippolytus, is coming: O subdue,  
My royal lord, subdue that baleful rage;  
Consult the good of your unhappy house.

HIPPOLYTUS, THESEUS, CHORUS.

HIP. Hearing your voice, I with the utmost speed  
Am hither come, O father; though whence rise



These groans I know not, and from you would learn.  
 Ha ! what is here ? Your consort, O my sire,  
 I see, a breathless corse : this needs must cause  
 The greatest wonder. Since I left her living  
 How short the intervening space ! But now  
 She oped those eyes to view the radiant sun.  
 What dire mischance befell her, in what manner  
 She died, inform me. Are you silent still ?  
 In our calamities of no avail  
 Is silence : for solicitous to know  
 All that hath passed, with greediness the heart  
 Explores a tale of woe ; nor is it just,  
 My father, your afflictions to conceal  
 From friends, and those who are yet more than  
 friends.

THE. O mortals, why, unprofitably lost  
 In many errors, strive ye to attain  
 A thousand specious arts, some new device  
 Still meditating, yet ye neither know  
 One rare attainment, nor by your inquiries  
 Could ever reach the gift of teaching those  
 Who lack discretion how to think aright ?

HIP. The sage you speak of, he who could compel  
 Fools to grow wise, must be expert indeed.  
 But since the subtle arguments you use  
 Are so ill-timed, my sire, I greatly fear  
 Your woes should cause your tongue to go beyond  
 The bounds of reason.

THE. With some clearer test  
 Man ought to have been furnished, to discern  
 The thoughts and sever from the real friend  
 Each vile impostor. All the human race  
 Should have two voices—one of sacred truth,  
 No matter what the other : 'gainst each plot  
 Devised by foul injustice, hence the first  
 Might in perpetual evidence come forth,  
 And none could be deceived.

HIP. Hath any friend  
 Accused me in your ear, and fixed reproach  
 Upon the guiltless ? I with dire amaz

Am smitten : in such incoherent words  
Your rage bursts forth that horror fills my soul.

THE. Ah, whither will the mind of man proceed.  
In its career? Can nature fix no bounds  
To impudence? For if this evil take  
Still deeper root through each succeeding age,  
The son grown more abandoned than the father,  
In pity to this world the gods should add  
Another world sufficient to contain  
All those who swerve from justice and the brood  
Of sinners. Look upon that impious wretch,  
Though sprung from my own loins, who hath defiled  
My nuptial couch; too clearly the deceased  
His most atrocious villany hath proved.  
Show then thy face before thy injured sire,  
Since to this pitch of unexampled guilt  
Thou hast proceeded. Yet art thou the man  
Who holds familiar converse with the gods  
As though his life were perfect? Art thou chaste  
And pure from all defilement? By thy boasts  
I will not be deluded, nor suspect  
Thou canst impose upon the powers divine.  
Now glory in thy vegetable food,  
Disciple of the tuneful Orpheus, rave  
With Bacchus' frantic choir, and let the fumes  
Of varied learning soothe thee. Thou art caught.  
From me let all take warning, and avoid  
Those artful hypocrites who bait the snare  
With words denoting great austerity,  
While they contrive base projects. She is dead,  
And so thou deem'st thyself secure; yet hence  
Thy guilt, O miscreant, is more clearly proved.  
What weightier oath, what plea canst thou devise  
This letter to confute, that thou mayst 'scape  
Unpunished for thy crime? Wilt thou allege  
She hated thee, and that thy spurious birth  
Makes the legitimate thy foe? 'Twill argue  
That she was prodigal of life, if thus  
*She forfeited whate'er her soul held dear*

Through enmity to thee. But man belike  
Is privileged from lust, whose power innate  
Misleads frail woman. Well am I aware  
Both male and female are alike exposed  
To danger, oft as Cytherea fires  
The youthful heart, although a partial world  
Forbear to brand our sex with equal shame.  
But wherefore in an idle strife of words  
With thee should I engage, when here, the corse,  
That witness most irrefragable, lies?  
With speed an exile from this land depart,  
Nor dare to enter Athens by the gods  
Erected, or the bounds of my domain.  
For if from thee I tamely should submit  
To wrongs like these, no more would Sinnis tell  
How erst I slew him at the Isthmian pass,  
But say my boasts are vain; nor would the rocks  
Of Schiron, dashed by the surrounding waves,  
Call me the scourge of villains.

CHOR.

At a loss

Am I of any mortal how to speak  
As truly happy: for their lot who once  
Were blest hath undergone a total change.

HIP. Though dreadful, O my father, is the wrath  
And vehement commotion of your soul,  
The charge against me which now seems so strong,  
If duly searched into, will prove devoid  
Of truth and honour. I am not expert  
At an harangue before assembled crowds,  
Though somewhat better qualified to speak  
Among my youthful comrades, and where few  
Are present; a sufficient cause for this  
May be assigned; for they who are held cheap  
Among the wise, in more harmonious strains  
Address the people. Yet am I constrained  
By the severe emergency to burst  
The bonds of silence, and begin my speech  
With a discussion of that odious charge  
By you first urged against me, to convict

And bar me from replying. Do your eyes  
Behold the sun and wide extent of earth?  
Say, what you list; of all the numerous tribes  
Who here were born, there's not a man more chaste  
Than I am: the first knowledge I acquired  
Was this—to reverence the immortal gods,  
And with those friends associate who attempt  
Nought by the laws condemned, but are endued  
With a deep sense of virtuous shame, and scorn  
Either themselves to practise or to aid  
Unseemly actions. I ne'er made a jest  
Of those whom I converse with, O my sire,  
But to my friends have still remained the same  
When they are absent as when near at hand:  
And above all, by that peculiar crime  
In which you think that you have caught me now,  
Am I untainted: by impure delight  
I to this day have never been enticed.  
Of love and its transactions nought I know,  
Except what I from casual talk have heard  
Or seen in pictures, but I am not eager  
To look on these, for still my soul retains  
Its virgin purity. But if no credence  
My spotless chastity with you should find,  
On you is it incumbent to show how  
I was corrupted. Did your consort's charms  
Eclipse all other women? Could I hope  
Beneath your roofs to dwell, and with your wife  
That I the rich inheritance should gain?  
This sure had been the highest pitch of folly.  
But what a bait is empire! None at all  
To those who are discreet, unless a lust  
For kingly power already hath corrupted  
Those who delight in it O'er all the sons  
Of Greece, in every honourable strife,  
Is it my great ambition to prevail,  
And be the first; but rather in the state  
Would I live happy with my dearest friends,  
And occupy the second rank: for bliss

Exempt from every danger, there is found,  
 Transcending all that royalty can give.  
 One thing there is by me not mentioned yet :  
 Though all beside already have you heard.  
 Had I a single witness like myself,  
 Of tried veracity, and could debate  
 With her while yet she lived, you from the fact,  
 After a strict inquiry, might decide  
 Which was the criminal. But now, by Jove,  
 Who guards the oath inviolate, I swear,  
 And by the conscious ground on which we tread,  
 That I your consort never did approach—  
 No, not in will or deed. May I expire  
 Stript of renown, and overwhelmed with shame,  
 Torn from my country, my paternal house,  
 An exile and a vagrant through the world,  
 Nor may the ocean or the earth receive  
 My breathless corse, if I have thus transgressed !  
 I know not whether 'twas through fear she lost  
 Her life, and more than this I must not say.  
 With her discretion amply hath supplied  
 The place of chastity ; I still have practised  
 That virtue, but, alas ! without success.

CHOR. Sufficient is it to refute the charge  
 That thou this oath hast taken, and called down  
 The powers immortal to attest its truth.

THE. Is he not rather an audacious cheat,  
 Trusting in magic arts, who dares to think  
 He by an oath can bias the resolves  
 Of his insulted sire ?

HIP. The part you act  
 Challenges my astonishment. Were you  
 My son, and I your father, had you dared  
 To violate my wife, I would not banish,  
 But kill you.

THE. Seasonable remark : the sentence  
 Which on thyself with justice thou hast passed  
 I will not now inflict ; for instant death  
 Is grateful to the wretched. But ordained

An exile from thy native land to roam,  
A life of tedious sorrow shalt thou drag  
In foreign realms ; such are the wages due  
To an unrighteous man.

HIP. What means my sire?  
Instead of waiting till impartial time  
The merits of my conduct ascertain,  
Hence will you banish me?

THE. Had I the power,  
Beyond the ocean, and where Atlas stands  
Upon the utmost limits of the world,  
So strong the hatred which to thee I bear—

HIP. What, without searching into any proof  
From oath, or witness, or the voice of seers,  
Expel me uncondemned from these domains !

THE. This letter, which no soothsayer can require  
To make it better understood, the charge  
'Gainst thee authenticates; so to those birds  
Who hover o'er our heads I bid adieu.

HIP. Why I am not permitted, O ye gods,  
To ope my mouth, when I my ruin owe  
To you whom I adore? I will not speak :  
For he I ought to move hath 'gainst my voice  
Closed his obdurate ears : I should infringe  
A solemn oath, and sport with Heaven in vain.

THE. To me past all endurance is that mask  
Of sanctity which thou assum'st. With speed  
Why go'st thou not from thy paternal land?

HIP. Whither can I betake myself? What friend  
Will to his house admit an exiled wretch  
Charged with this great offence?

THE.    Whoe'er receives  
Each base invader of the marriage bed,  
And with the wicked man delights to dwell.

HIP. What wounds my soul, and from these eyes extorts  
The tear, is your believing me so wicked.

THE. There was a proper season for these groans  
And all thy forethought, when thou to dishonour  
*The consort of thy father didst presume.*



HIP. O mansions, would to Heaven that ye a voice  
Could utter, and your testimony give,  
Whether I have transgressed.

THE. Hast thou recourse  
To witnesses who lack the power of speech ?  
Beyond all words this deed thy guilt displays.

HIP. In such position as to view my soul  
O could I stand, that I might cease to weep  
For the calamities I now endure !

THE. Thou thine own merits hast much more been wont  
To reverence, than with pious awe to treat  
Thy parents as thy duty doth enjoin.

HIP. Unhappy mother ! wretched son ! Avert  
The curse which on a spurious race attends,  
From those who share my friendship, righteous gods !

THE. Will ye not drag him from my sight, ye slaves ?  
Did you not hear how I long since decreed  
He shall be banished !

HIP. They should rue it soon,  
If they presumed to touch me. But yourself  
May from these realms expel me if you list.

THE. If thou obey not these commands, I will :  
For I feel no compassion for thy exile.

[Exit THESEUS.]

HIP. The sentence is, it seems, already passed ;  
Wretch that I am ! My doom indeed I know,  
Yet know not in what language to express  
The pangs I feel. O thou to me most dear  
Of all the gods, Latona's virgin daughter,  
Who dwell'st with me, companion of the chase,  
Far from illustrious Athens let us fly ;  
I to that city and Erectheus' land  
Now bid farewell. O thou Troezenian realm,  
Fraught with each varied pleasure youth admires,  
Adieu ! I see thee now for the last time,  
And these last parting words to thee address :  
Come, O ye youths, my comrades, hither come,  
Speak kindly to me now, and till we reach  
The frontiers of this country, on my steps

Attend. For ye shall ne'er behold a man  
More chaste, though such I seem not to my sire.

[*Exit* HIPPOLYTUS.]

CHORUS.

ODE.

I. 1.

When I reflect on Heaven's just sway,  
Each anxious thought is driven away ;  
But, ah ! too soon, hope's flattering prospect ends,  
And in this harassed soul despair succeeds,  
When I compare with human deeds  
What fate those deeds attends.  
At each various period changing,  
Formed upon no settled plan,  
In a maze of errors ranging,  
Veers the precarious life of man.

I. 2.

May the kind gods' paternal care,  
Attentive to their votary's prayer,  
Grant unalloyed prosperity and wealth,  
Let me enjoy, without conspicuous fame.  
A character unstained by shame,  
With mental ease and health :  
Thus exempt from wrinkled sorrow,  
Would I ape the circling mode,  
Alter my conduct with the morrow,  
And snatch each pleasure as it flowed.

II. 1.

Now I a heart no longer pure  
Against the shocks of fortune can secure,  
But feel at length e'en hope itself expire :  
Since from the land we see that star, whose light  
On Athens shone serenely bright,  
Removed by Theseus' ire.  
Lament, thick scattered on the shore, ye sands,  
Where Trœzene's city stands,  
And steep mountains, which ascending

With thy hounds to trace the prey,  
Thou, Hippolytus, attending  
Dictynna, the swift hind didst slay.

II. 2.

No longer the Hennesian steeds,  
Yoked to thy chariot, o'er yon sacred meads  
Around the ring, wilt thou expertly guide.  
'The Muse, whose lyre is doomed to sound no more,  
Shall the paternal house deplore,  
Bereft of thee its pride.  
For Dian's haunts beneath th' embowering shade  
Now no hand the wreath will braid.  
Thou art from this region banished,  
Hence is Hymen's torch decayed:  
All prospects of thy love are vanished,  
The rivalry of many a maid.

III.

By thy calamity inspired,  
With plaintive strains will I bewail thy fate,  
O wretched mother, who in vain  
The throes of childbirth didst sustain.  
I with indignant hate  
Against the gods themselves am fired.  
Ah, gentle graces, smiling at his birth,  
Could not you screen by your benignant power  
Your guiltless votary, in an evil hour  
Sentenced to wander far from his paternal earth?  
The servant of Hippolytus, with looks  
Which witness grief, I see in haste approach.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. Ye matrons, whither shall I speed my course  
To find the royal Theseus? If ye know,  
Inform me; is the monarch here within?

CHOR. Forth from the palace he in person comes.

THESEUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MES. O Theseus, the intelligence I bring  
Deserves the serious thoughts of you, and all

The citizens who, or in Athens dwell,  
Or on the borders of Trœzene's land.

THE. What mean'st thou? Hath some recent woe  
befallen

These two adjacent cities?

MES. In one word,

To sum up all, Hippolytus is dead;  
For he but for a moment views the sun.

THE. Say, by what hostile arm the miscreant fell.  
Did any one, whose wife with brutal force,  
As late his father's, he defiled, assail him?

MES. The fiery coursers who his chariot drew  
Destroyed him, and the curses you addressed  
To the stern ruler of the deep, your sire,  
Against your son.

THE. Thanks, O ye righteous gods;  
Now, Neptune, hast thou proved thyself my father,  
Since thou my imprecations hast fulfilled.  
Inform me how he perished, how the sword  
Of justice smote the villain who hath wronged me.

MES. We, near the beach, oft dashed by the hoarse  
waves

Of ocean, smoothed his generous coursers' manes,  
Yet weeping. For a messenger arrived  
With tidings that Hippolytus no more  
Would to this realm be suffered to return,  
Sentenced by you to miserable exile.

But, to confirm this piteous tale, soon came  
The banished prince, and joined us on the strand,  
A numerous group of comrades on his steps  
Attended. After a long pause, he said,  
Ceasing his plaints: "Why still should I lament  
My doom, my father's word must be obeyed:  
Those steeds, ye servants, harness to the car;  
Trœzene is no longer my abode."

Soon as we heard, all hastened: these commands  
Scarce was there time to issue, when we brought  
The ready coursers harnessed to their lord:  
Mounting his chariot then the reins he seized,

When he his feet had in strong buskins clad :  
But first with hands outspread invoked the gods,  
And cried : " O righteous Jove, here end my life  
If I have sinned : but let my father know  
How much he wrongs us, whether we expire  
Or still behold the light." With lifted thong  
The rapid coursers onward then he drove ;  
We servants close behind our master's car  
Followed, along the Epidaurian road,  
Which leads direct to Argos. But at length,  
Passing the limits of this realm, we entered  
A wilderness adjoining to the coast  
Of the Saronian deep : a dreadful sound  
Was from the inmost caverns of the earth  
Sent forth, like Jove's own thunder, while the steeds,  
Astonished, with their heads and ears erect  
Towards Heaven, stopped short. An instant terror seized  
On all of us ; we wondered whence the sound  
Could issue, till at length, as on the beach  
We looked, a mighty wave we saw, which reached  
The skies, and from our view concealed the cliffs  
Of Sciron, the whole isthmus covered o'er,  
And Æsculapius' rock, then to a size  
The most enormous swollen, and pouring forth  
With loud explosion foam on every side,  
The tide impelled it onward to the coast  
Where stood the harnessed steeds ; amid the storm  
And whirlwind's rage the wave disgorged a bull,  
Ferocious monster, with whose bellowings filled,  
All earth resounded horribly : our eyes  
Scarce could endure the sight. With panic fear  
The steeds were seized that instant : but meantime  
Their lord, who to the managing them long  
Had been inured, caught up with both his hands  
The reins, and drew them tight, as the rude oar  
A sailor plies ; exerting all his strength,  
Then backward leaned, and twisted them around  
His body : but the raging coursers gnashed  
Their steely curbs, and scoured along the field

Regardless of the hand that steered their course,  
 Or rein or polished car. Along the plain,  
 If he attempted their career to guide,  
 The bull in front appeared, to turn them back,  
 And e'en to madness scared: but if they ran  
 Close to the shelving rocks with frantic rage,  
 He, silently approaching, followed hard  
 Behind the chariot; 'gainst a rugged cliff,  
 Till he the wheel directing, had o'erthrown  
 The vehicle. 'Twas dire confusion all:  
 Upward the spokes and shivered axle flew;  
 The hapless youth, entangled in the reins,  
 Confined by an inextricable bond,  
 Was dragged along; against the rock his head  
 With violence was dashed, and his whole body  
 Received full many a wound. These horrid words  
 He uttered with a shriek: "Stop, O my steeds,  
 Nor kill the master in whose stalls ye fed!  
 O dreadful imprecations of my sire!  
 Who is at hand to save a virtuous man?"  
 Though many wished to rescue him, too late  
 We came. But from the broken reins released,  
 At length, I know not by what means, he fell,  
 In a small portion yet the breath of life  
 Retaining. But the horses, from all eyes,  
 And that accursed monster, were concealed  
 Among the mountains, where I cannot tell.  
 Though I indeed, O king, am in your house  
 A servant, yet I never can be brought  
 To think your son was with such guilt defiled,  
 Though the whole race of women should expire  
 Suspended in the noose, and every pine  
 On Ida's summit were with letters filled;  
 So well am I convinced that he was virtuous.

CHOR. The measure of our recent woes is full:  
 No means, alas, are left for us to 'scape  
 The sentence of unalterable fate.

THE. From hatred to the man who hath endured  
 These sufferings I with pleasure heard thy tale:



But now through a just reverence for the gods,  
And for that wretch, because he was my son,  
I from his woes nor joy nor sorrow feel.

MES. But whither must we bear the dying youth,  
To gratify your wish, or how proceed?  
Consider well: but if you would adopt  
My counsels, you with harshness would not treat  
Your hapless son.

THE. The miscreant hither bring;  
That I, when face to face I shall behold  
Him who denies that he my nuptial bed  
Polluted, may convict him by my words,  
And these calamities the gods inflict. [*Exit MESSENGER.*]

CHOR. To yours, O Venus, and your son's control,

Whose glittering pinions speed his flight,

The gods incline their stubborn soul,

And mortals yielding to resistless might.

For, o'er land and stormy main,

Love is borne, who can restrain

By more than magic art

Each furious impulse of the heart:

Savage whelps on mountains bred,

Monsters in the ocean fed,

All who on earth behold the solar ray,

And man, his mild behests obey.

For you, O Venus, you alone

Sit on an unrivalled throne,

By each duteous votary feared,

As a mighty queen revered.

DIANA, THESEUS, CHORUS.

DIA. Thee, sprung from noble Ægeus, I command  
To listen, for to thee Diana speaks,  
The daughter of Latona. Why, O Theseus,  
Do these disastrous tidings fill thy heart  
With pleasure, when unjustly thou hast slain  
Thy son, the false assertions of thy consort  
On no clear proof believing? Yet too clear  
Is the atrocious guilt thou hast incurred.

Covered with shame, why hid'st thou not thy head  
 In gloomy Tartarus, in the realms beneath ;  
 Or, this abhorred pollution to escape,  
 On active wings why mount'st thou not the skies ?  
 In the society of virtuous men  
 Thou canst not pass the remnant of thy life.  
 Hear me, O Theseus, while I state the ills  
 In which thou art involved : though now to thee  
 It can avail no longer, thy regret  
 Will I excite. The purposes I came for  
 Are these : to show that to thy son belongs  
 An upright heart, how to preserve his fame  
 His life he loses, and that frantic rage  
 Thy consort seized, whose conduct hath in part  
 Been generous : for, with lawless passion stung,  
 By that pernicious goddess, whom myself,  
 And all to whom virginity is dear,  
 Peculiarly abhor, she loved thy son,  
 And while she strove by reason to o'ercome  
 Th' assaults of Venus, unconsenting fell  
 By those vile stratagems her nurse devised,  
 Who to thy son the queen's disease revealed  
 Under the awful sanction of an oath ;  
 But he, by justice rendered strong, complied not  
 With her solicitations, yet no wrongs  
 Which he from thee experienced could provoke  
 The pious youth to violate that faith  
 Which he had sworn to. She meanwhile alarmed,  
 Lest to his father he her guilt should prove,  
 Wrote that deceitful letter, on thy soul  
 Gaining too prompt a credence, and thy son  
 Hath by her baleful artifice destroyed.

THE.

Ah me !

DIA. Doth what I have already spoken,  
 O Theseus, wound thee ? To the sequel lend  
 A patient ear, and thou shalt find just cause  
 To wail yet more. Thou know'st thy sire engaged  
 That thy petitions thrice he would fulfil ;  
 And one of these, O thou most impious man,



HIP.

How am I rent,

Ah me ! through those unrighteous vows pronounced  
By an unrighteous father ! Through my head  
Shoot dreadful pangs, and strong convulsions rend  
My tortured brain. Ah me ! Lay down to rest  
This shattered body ! Ye accursed steeds,  
Though fed with my own hand, have ye destroyed  
And slain your master. Ah, I by the gods  
Entreat you, softly handle, O my friends,  
This wounded frame. Who stands there on my right ?  
Carefully raise me up, and bear along  
With even step a wretch who hath been cursed  
By his mistaken sire. Jove, righteous Jove,  
Behold'st thou this ? I who devoutly worshipped  
The gods, and all the human race excelled  
In chastity, deprived of life am plunged  
Into the yawning subterraneous realms  
Of Orcus. Sure I exercised in vain  
Each pious toil to benefit mankind.  
My pangs return afresh. Let loose your hold !  
Come, death, thou best of medicines. Kill me ! kill me !  
O for a sword to pierce my heart, and close  
In endless slumbers this detested life.  
How inauspicious was my father's curse !  
That lingering vengeance which pursues the guilt  
By my progenitors in ancient days  
Committed, and my kindred who are stained  
With recent murders, terminate in me,  
No longer now suspended. O ye gods,  
Why do ye punish me who had no share  
In those enormities ? But in what words  
Can I express myself, or how escape  
From the oppressive numbness which weighs down  
My senses ? Would to Heaven the fates who haunt  
Pluto's abode, the realm of ancient night,  
Would lay me down in everlasting sleep !

DIA. With what calamity, O hapless youth,  
Hast thou been yoked ! It is thy generous soul  
Which hath destroyed thee.

HIP. From celestial lips  
How doth a fragrant odour breathe around !  
Amid my sufferings thee did I perceive,  
The pangs I feel were instantly assuaged.  
Diana sure is here.

DIA. Beside thee stands  
Thy favourite goddess.

HIP. Dost thou see my woes,  
O thou whom I adore ?

DIA. These eyes behold  
What thou endur'st : but thy no tear must shed.

HIP. Thy faithful comrade in the sylvan chase,  
Thy votary is no more.

DIA. Alas ! no more !  
Yet e'en in death to me thou still art dear.

HIP. Nor he who drove thy fiery steeds, and watched  
Thy images.

DIA. These stratagems, by Venus,  
From whom all mischief takes its rise, were planned.

HIP. Too well I know the goddess who destroyed me.

DIA. For her neglected homage much enraged  
Against thee, to the chaste a constant foe.

HIP. Us three I find her hatred hath undone.

DIA. Thy father, thou, and his unhappy wife  
Complete that number.

HIP. I bewail my sire.

DIA. Him by her arts that goddess hath misled.

HIP. To you, my father, this event hath proved  
A source of woes abundant.

THE. O my son,  
I perish, and in life have now no joy.

HIP. Yet more for you, who have been thus deluded,  
Than for myself, I grieve.

THE. My son, I gladly  
Would die to save thee.

HIP. Fatal gifts of Neptune  
Your father.

THE. Now most earnestly I wish  
These lips had never uttered such a prayer.

HIP. What then? You would have slain me, such your wrath.

THE. Because I by the gods was then deprived  
Of understanding.

HIP. O that in return  
Mankind could with their curses blast the gods!

DIA. Be pacified: for in earth's darksome caves,  
The rage of Venus who on thee hath wreaked  
Such horrors for thy pure and virtuous soul  
I will not suffer unatoned to rest.

For in requital, my vindictive hand  
With these inevitable darts shall smite  
The dearest of her votaries. But on thee  
These sufferings to reward will I bestow  
The greatest honours in Trœzene's realm:  
For to thy shade, ere jocund Hymen wave  
The kindled torch, each nymph her tresses shorn  
Shall dedicate, and with abundant tears  
For a long season thy decease bewail.

In their harmonious ditties the chaste choir  
Of virgins ever shall record thy fate,  
Nor pass unnoticed Phædra's hapless love.  
But, O thou son of Ægeus, in those arms  
Embrace the dying youth; for 'gainst thy will  
Didst thou destroy him. When the gods ordain  
That man should err, he cannot disobey.

This counsel, O Hippolytus, to thee  
I give; no hatred to thy father bear,  
For well thou know'st from whence thy fate arose.  
And now farewell! for I am not allowed  
To view unholy corpses of the slain,  
Or with the pangs of those who breathe their last  
Pollute these eyes: too clearly I discern  
That thou art near the moment of thy death. [*Exit* DIANA]

HIP. Farewell, blest virgin, grieve not thus to part  
From a most faithful votary, who with thee  
Hath long held converse. With my sire I end  
All strife at thy behest; for to thy words  
I still have been obedient. Wretched me!  
Already thickest darkness overspreads



These swimming eyes. My father, in your arms  
Receive me, and support this sinking frame.

THE. How, O my son, dost thou increase my woes !

HIP. I perish, and already view the gates  
Of yon drear realms beneath.

THE. But wilt thou leave  
My soul polluted ?

HIP. No, from the foul crime  
You I absolve.

THE. What saidst thou ? Shall the stain  
Of having shed thy blood no longer rest  
On me thy murderer ?

HIP. Let Diana witness,  
Who with her shafts subdues the savage brood.

THE. How generous is this treatment of thy sire,  
My dearest son !

HIP. Farewell ! a long adieu  
I bid to you, my father.

THE. Ah, how pious,  
How virtuous is thy soul !

HIP. Implore the gods  
That all your race legitimate may tread  
In the same path.

THE. Desert me not, my son :  
Take courage.

HIP. It is now, alas ! too late,  
For, O my sire, I die. Make no delay,  
But with this garment cover o'er my face. [He dies.

THE. Minerva's fortress, thou Athenian realm,  
Of what a virtuous prince art thou deprived !  
Ah, wretched me ! how oft shall I reflect,  
O Venus, on the ills which thou hast caused.

CHOR. On our whole city hath this public loss  
Fallen unforeseen. Abundant tears shall flow.  
When bleed the mighty, their sad history leaves  
A more profound impression on the heart.

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